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Allegiances

~COPYRIGHT STATEMENT REGARDING MY WARRIORS FICS~
I am putting this here simply because it has become quite an issue lately. Please DO NOT use my original characters/clans/concepts in any of your Warriors fics. (This does not include warriors cats with the same names. I understand coincidences if we happened to pick the same names for our characters.) I work hard on my novels, and it is upsetting to witness a circumstance where the author feels they need to "borrow" ideas/characters from me because they're not creative enough. Simply stated, the Warriors world is big and complex enough for an author to be able to create his or her own characters/clans/plot. Thank you for your understanding.

~STATEMENT REGARDING GRAMMATICAL ERRORS AND COMMENTS~

Please REFRAIN from continually correcting typos and grammatical errors. I am a grammar nazi myself, and I understand some of you are too, but I have several published works and do not have time to correct EVERY error. Unless the error severely limits your understanding of the story, I will not be taking immediate action to fix these typos. Please REFRAIN from telling me "cats can't cry" and "cats can't blush" etc. These novels are a work of FICTION. I know cats can't cry and perform human-like characteristics; however, this is a work of fiction and is written in a way to convey emotion. I am sick and tired of getting comments like these because they detract from my work and make it seem like you care more about correcting typos/ (sorry) being a pompous know-it-all than reading and enjoying a work. Don't be surprised if I get sassy/sarcastic with you in the comments. I ask you refrain from making such comments on my work.

SNOWCLAN CATS(Only those who are mentioned in the story):

Leader: Smokestar (white tom with black spots and green eyes)

Mate: Wavestorm, Formerly Lilywhisker

Deputy: Cloudfur (white tom with blue eyes) Mate: Dovewing

Medicine Cat: Spottedmask (Snowshoe she-cat)

~Apprentice: Tawnypaw (tortoiseshell she-cat)

WARRIORS:

Largefoot (gray tabby tom)

Blackheart (black tom with yellow eyes)

Dovewing (ginger she-cat with green eyes) Mate: Cloudfur

Longtail (tan tom with green eyes and long tail) Mate: Formerly Petalnose

Foxflame (ginger tabby tom with green eyes) Mate: Petalstream

Swiftstorm (large ginger tom) Mate: Oceanwing

Dawnfire (dark ginger she-cat)

Graystorm (gray tabby tom with green eyes) Crush: Ivygaze

Cottonnose (white tom with green eyes) Mate: Snowtail

Ivygaze (gray and white she-cat. mute) Mate: Ashclaw

Blazeheart (muscular ginger tabby tom) Mate: Dawnpool

Featherwing (Siamese she-cat) Crush: Whitepaw

Waterdrop (silver-blue she-cat) Crush: Rainpaw

Lilywhisker (golden-brown tabby she-cat with blue eyes) Mate: None, Formerly Smokestar

Yarrowwhisker (black tom with white ear) Mate: Cindertail

Ashclaw (gray tom with green eyes) Mate: Ivygaze

Cindertail (light gray tabby she-cat with green eyes) Mate: Yarrowwhisker

Thornfrost (golden-brown tabby tom with green eyes) Crush: Mousepaw/Sandpaw/Tawnypaw

Mousestripe (white she-cat with black spots and icy blue eyes) Crush: Reedkit

Dawnpool (light gray tabby she-cat with icy blue eyes) Mate: Blazeheart

Mintfall (gray and white she-cat with green eyes) Mate: Blackheart

Oceanwing (black she-cat with blue eyes) Mate: Swiftstorm

APPRENTICES:

Moonpaw (tortoiseshell she-cat)

Fernpaw (black tortoiseshell she-cat)

Sunpaw (white she-cat with small orange patches)

Honeypaw (golden she-cat)

Gorgepaw (dark brown tom with amber eyes)

Coalpaw (black tom with green eyes) Crush: Dawnpool

Rainpaw (gray tabby tom with green eyes) Crush: Waterdrop

Darkpaw (black tom with amber eyes)

Mosspaw (white tom with black on the tips of ears)

QUEENS:

Applewhisker (calico she-cat with green eyes) Mate: Swamptail (FoxClan) Expecting Swamptail of FoxClan's kits

Wavestorm (gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes) Mate: Smokestar Expecting Smokestar's kits

Petalstream (cream colored she-cat with blue eyes) Mate: Foxflame Kits: Reedkit, Littlekit, Swiftkit, and Larkkit

Snowtail (white she-cat with one blue and one amber eye) Mate: Cottonnose Expecting Cottonnose's kits

KITS:

Reedkit (brown tabby tom with green eyes and broken tail) Crush: Mousestripe

Littlekit: (tiny black she-cat with green eyes)

Swiftkit (white and gray tom)

Larkkit (light ginger tabby she-cat)

ELDERS:

Darkwhisper (gray tabby tom)

Newfeather (calico she-cat)

Blossom (old white she-cat with blue eyes)

Nightfur (black she-cat with green eyes)

Sandnose (light ginger she-cat) Not elder age. Broke her spine and is paralyzed from her waist down

NIGHTCLAN:

Leader: Cloudstar (white tom)

Deputy: Stormfur (gray tabby tom) Mate: Silverstripe

Warriors:

Silverstripe (silver tabby she-cat) Mate: Stormfur

Prologue

Within only minutes of him walking towards the camp, Mosskit heard a sharp hiss.

"Who are you?!" a cat hissed.

Mosskit turned around, facing a large ginger tabby tom, his arms and legs muscular. Mosskit quivered in fear.

"Blazeheart, don't be so hard on him! He's just a kit!" a silver-blue she-cat said.

"Is this SnowClan?" Mosskit asked.

The she-cat nodded. "Yes, my name is Waterdrop. I'm a SnowClan warrior. This is my apprentice, Fernpaw." Mosskit noticed the black tortoiseshell apprentice near her who was almost the same size. Fernpaw would no doubt be a warrior soon.

Mosskit nodded.

"Waterdrop, we can't stand around and talk to a kit all day!" Blazeheart spat.

Waterdrop rolled her eyes. "Are you lost, little one?"

"I'm not little!" Mosskit replied. "I'm old enough to be an apprentice!"

"Are you here to join SnowClan?" Fernpaw asked.

"Yes," Mosskit replied.

"We can't just let a kit we found into SnowClan!" Blazeheart argued.

"I'm not a kit!" Mosskit spat, anger spiking his pelt.

"Fine, an apprentice. This could be a NightClan cat. Or FoxClan. It could be a trap," he said.

A Siamese she-cat shook her head, an apprentice by her side too. "Honestly, you really think they would give away their kit to spy? This kit means no harm."

"Blazeheart might have a point, Featherwing," a large light ginger tom spoke. "This kit could've been told to spy."

"I'm not a spy!" Mosskit hissed.

"Who are you then?" Featherwing asked.

"My name is Mosskit. I'm Skycloud's son," Mosskit spoke.

He gasped as the crowd subsided, and an older white tom with blue eyes stepped forward. "Skycloud's son?"

He was then led away without any word, right into the SnowClan camp.

Chapter 1

Mosskit stood on the rock with Smokestar, the leader of SnowClan. He was nervous. Smokestar would be asking him questions, so would the clan, about what had happened. Many were confused, them only seeing Mosskit once when Skycloud had returned. Not many believed Mosskit had been her kit when she had returned.

Smokestar yowled to the cats, bringing them forward to the rock, all curious about the mysterious tom who had shown up on their territory.

"This cat, Mosskit, was on our territory today. He claims to be the son of Skycloud!" Smokestar yowled.

Yowls of disagreement came from the crowd.

Mosskit shrunk down, horrified by the terrifying crowd.

"Questions will be asked," Smokestar said. "We were all curious to what happened to Skycloud that night. This cat might know why." Smokestar turned to Mosskit. "Who is your father if you are the son of Skycloud?"

"My father was Mossclaw," Mosskit said. "I'm named after him."

"He could be her son!" the same white tom who had stared at Mosskit earlier yowled. "Mossclaw was good friends with Skycloud and before his death it seemed like they were in love."

"What can you say about this?" Smokestar asked.

"I-I don't know much about what happened before I was born, but I was born in a den with my mother with some cat named Tooth," Mosskit said.

"Tooth! That was the MoonClan cat who captured them!" a ginger tom yowled.

"Continue," Smokestar spoke.

"W-well my mother told me all about how Tooth had captured her after Mossclaw was killed and how bad Tooth was. But then she-she fell in love with Tooth. When he was captured, I was brought here, not really knowing anything about this place, but then my mother took me back and we rescued Tooth. That night there was a fire...Skycloud and Tooth died in it," Mosskit said.

"And how was it you were able to escape?!" a light tabby she-cat yowled.

"I ran all night to get away from the fire," Mosskit said. "Skycloud told me to run."

"And why have you just arrived back here now?!" a gray tabby tom hissed.

"Because I had run terribly far! At first an old she-cat took care of me, but then she...she got injured and left me at a twoleg house which I lived in for a moon or so..."

"He's a kittypet!" a dark ginger she-cat yowled.

"Hush, Dawnfire," Smokestar said.

"But I left with another kittypet who had also been a clan cat, but she had been neglected by her mother. She was my age. The old she-cat had...recovered...and she led us back here."

"Where's the she-cat?" a golden-brown tom asked.

"She-she died," Mosskit sighed.

Smokestar rested his tail on Mosskit's shoulder. "Alright, I think we can all conclude that Mosskit is the true son of Skycloud and Mossclaw."

Cats nodded in agreement.

"So, Mosskit. Will you stay?" Smokestar asked.

Mosskit nodded. "Oh yes, Smokestar. I'd like to stay."

"Well, you're the age of an apprentice. Let's make you one right now," Smokestar announced. "Cats of SnowClan! We have been blessed to receive Skycloud's offspring with us today. Mosskit is well the age of an apprentice which means he shall become one. Mosskit, from this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Mosspaw!"

"MOSSPAW! MOSSPAW!" the clan shouted.

Mosspaw smiled into the crowd, giving a warm gaze towards every cat.

"As for your mentor, I am Skycloud's brother, so therefore I think I should mentor you so you can get used to the other cats."

Mosspaw was frozen. Wait, wasn't Cloudfur Skycloud's brother? He didn't understand at all. He hestitated for a moment, then touched his nose towards Smokestar's.

Cats began to separate while the white tom with blue eyes stayed behind. Mosspaw turned, seeing the light tabby she-cat and gray tom who had not believed him glaring at him. Suddenly he stopped. These were the cats who had glared at him when he was a kit!

He turned away quickly, padding down from the rock.

"Mosspaw," the white tom said. "I don't know if you know this, but I'm Skycloud's brother, Cloudfur."

"Oh, I know," Mosspaw said. "My mother told me. She has a sister too, right? Where's Petalnose?"

Cloudfur looked at him oddly. "Petalnose has been dead for moons."

Mosspaw was confused. His mother had told him that her siblings would answer. Maybe she had died before he arrived. "Oh,

so it was after Skycloud's death?"

"Um, no. Petalnose died shortly after giving birth to her kits. Skycloud raised them," Cloudfur said.

Why had Skycloud not told Mosspaw any of this? He hadn't known Petalnose had kits and that his mother had raised them. He was so confused about his past.

Smokestar padded down after Mosspaw, laying a tail on his shoulder. "Sorry about the rampage of kits. We didn't know Skycloud was pregnant when she disappeared. We didn't even know Mossclaw and Skycloud were mates."

"Oh, I didn't either," Mosspaw said. "I don't really know a lot about my past."

"Well, if you have any questions, I'm sure Cloudfur or I can give you answers," Smokestar said.

"Thanks," Mosspaw said, watching Smokestar go off.

Mosspaw turned to Cloudfur, only to see him gone as well, leading cats onto patrol. How would Mosspaw get answers?!

Mosspaw padded up to Smokestar. "Um, can someone show me around?"

"Oh, dear me!" Smokestar laughed. "Of course. Um, Fernpaw!" he yowled.

The black tortoiseshell she-cat turned around. Mosspaw recognized her from earlier when she was in the woods with Waterdrop.

"Show Mosspaw around," Smokestar instructed.

"I will," Fernpaw said, dipping her head towards her leader. She then turned to Mosspaw. "What do you need to know?"

"Everything," Mosspaw said.

Fernpaw rolled her eyes. "Alright, come this way," she said, leading him to the den on the farthest left.

"What den is this?" Mosspaw asked.

"You'll see," Fernpaw replied, walking in.

Mosspaw gasped, seeing a small collection of cats in a den. They were obviously elders, their muzzles gray.

"The Elders' Den," Mosspaw breathed.

"Yeah, we don't have a bunch," Fernpaw said. "But they've been great warriors."

A calico she-cat spoke. "Hello, Fernpaw. Who's this with you?"

"Hi, Newfeather. This is Mosspaw. He's going to live here now," Fernpaw replied.

"Nice to meet you, Mosspaw. I hope you don't mind pulling off ticks," she chuckled.

As Mosspaw looked around, he stopped, noticing a fairly young she-cat, barely the age of a warrior, sitting in the den.

Fernpaw must've noticed too because she laid her tail on Mosspaw's shoulder. "I'll tell you later once we get out of here," she whispered.

Mosspaw nodded, following the large apprentice out of the den. "Who was that?" he asked. "Why was she in there?"

"Not so loud!" Fernpaw hissed. "That's Sandnose. Her brother is Darkpaw. When she was a younger apprentice, she jumped in a river and broke her spine. It paralyzed her bottom half, making her unable to move her legs. Smokestar moved her to the Elders' Den and gave her her warriors name of Sandnose."

"Oh, that's a shame," Mosspaw said.

Fernpaw nodded. "Come on. I don't have all day," she said, pulling him over to the next den.

Just by breathing in the scent of fresh milk, Mosspaw could tell it was the nursery. He walked in, only noticing one she-cat with kits pouncing around. Three other queens sat, all of them pregnant, their kits arriving soon.

"Oh, is this Mosspaw?" a white she-cat asked.

Fernpaw nodded. "Yes, I'm just showing him around."

Mosspaw smiled, seeing a little brown tom play with his tail.

"Reedkit, don't be rude to our visitors!" a cream she-cat snapped. "Sorry, he likes to play. I'm Petalstream. My four kits can be quite crazy sometimes."

Mosspaw smiled. The cream cat sat, a small black kit sleeping next to her. "What are your kits' names?" he asked.

"The brown tom is Reedkit. You probably know that already. It's a shame, really, he was born with a broken tail, but that doesn't slow him down. This little sweetheart sleeping next to me," she pointed to the small black kitten, "is Littlekit. Runt of the litter, but certainly not left out. And those two over there," she pointed to a ginger she-cat and a white and gray tom playing with each other, "are also my kits. The she-cat is Larkkit, her pelt takes after her father's and mine I guess. The tom is Swiftkit."

Mosspaw looked at the kits, noticing they were large, almost his size. They would no doubt be apprentices soon.

"I'm Petalstream, by the way," the cream she-cat said. "These four will be apprentices soon. I have no idea how their mentors will control them," she laughed.

"Who's the father?" Mosspaw asked.

"Foxflame," Petalstream purred. "He's a younger warrior, but the sweetest tom ever."

Mosspaw nodded, watching the kits play. Then he turned to the rest of the she-cats. "Who are all of you?" he asked.

An older calico she-cat spoke first. "My name is Applewhisker."

"Don't ask her about the father," a silver tabby spoke. "She gets upset. I'm Wavestorm, Smokestar's mate. This is my second litter that I'm expecting. My first are my three daughers-Snowtail, Featherwing, and...Waterdrop."

"My mentor!" Fernpaw exclaimed.

Wavestorm rolled her eyes, obviously annoyed by the mentioning of Waterdrop.

"And I'm Snowtail," the white she-cat said. "Her daugher," she said, pointing to Wavestorm. "It's so weird that we're both expecting," she laughed. "My mate is Cottonnose."

"Oh," Mosspaw said. "Well, it was great to meet all of you."

"You too," the she-cats called as they exited the den.

"Okay, another question," Mosspaw whispered towards Fernpaw. "Why is Wavestorm annoyed by Waterdrop?"

"I don't know if this true or not," Fernpaw whispered. "But, apparently when Waterdrop was a kit, her mother and siblings harassed her. No one cared about her."

"What about her father, Smokestar?" Mosspaw asked.

"Another thing. I know this is true because Honeypaw is gossiping about it all the time. Well, apparently Smokestar was in love with Wavestorm, but he decided to be with Lilywhisker, another warrior. You see, when he was going to tell Wavestorm he didn't love her, he found out Wavestorm was pregnant and she had expected Smokestar to ask her to be mates."

"Why are they mates now?" Mosspaw asked.

"Well, Wavestorm had her three daughers. Smokestar was never there for them. Lilywhisker had two daughters as well, Dawnpool and Mousestripe, they just became warriors recently. Well, Smokestar got put into this coma by the Dark Forest or something, and Lilywhisker saved him, but he thought she died. He asked Wavestorm to be mates again and when Lilywhisker returned alive, he just told her they weren't mates anymore. It's all very odd."

"That's weird," Mosspaw said.

"And now Wavestorm is expecting her second litter. We'll see how long it is before he changes his mind again," Fernpaw laughed. "Come on, there's more cats to see!"

She showed him the Warriors' Den, him meeting some of the cats mentioned earlier, plus some ones he had never seen before. He had also been introduced to Spottedmask, the medicine cat, and her apprentice, Tawnypaw.

Mosspaw had also learned that Cloudfur was the deputy, some thinking it was only because he was Smokestar's brother. Mosspaw was still confused.

"Well," Fernpaw said. "I have to go train. It was nice meeting you, Mosspaw. Bye," she waved.

Mosspaw smiled as she walked away. It felt nice to have a friend, or at least he thought they were friends.

He sighed, thinking of Snakekit. Was she really dead? He walked into the apprentice den, finding an empty nest. He hadn't bothered to remember all the names of the apprentices. It would probably take him awhile to memorize.

Mosspaw laid in his nest and fell asleep, dreaming back to the journey he had only completed that day.

Chapter 2

Mosspaw awoke to the a tail poking him. He opened his eyes, seeing a calico apprentice look over him. "Wake up!" she said. "You're about to miss patrols!"

Mosspaw quickly got up, still not sure what the name of the she-cat was. He padded outside fast, waiting for patrols with the rest of the apprentices and their mentors.

"Oh, Mosspaw," a voice came.

Mosspaw turned, seeing Smokestar padding towards him. "You're not going on patrols today," Smokestar explained. "We have to go over the basic training techniques of an apprentice. Come," he said, pulling Mosspaw away from the group of apprentices waiting patiently.

Mosspaw sighed. He had been woken up for nothing. He slowly followed Smokestar, nervousness clenching his stomach. What if he wasn't good enough to be an apprentice? He wished Snakekit was here with him.

"Have you learned all the names of the other cats yet?" Smokestar asked.

Mosspaw shook his head. "N-no, Smokestar. Just a few..."

Smokestar nodded. "It's important you know all the names of your clanmates."

"I-I'll try my best to learn," Mosspaw said.

"Good," Smokestar said, continuing to lead him farther into the dense forest.

Mosspaw looked around, breathing in the SnowClan scent and looking around. "Wow, it's beautiful in here," Mosspaw said.

Smokestar nodded. "I'll be showing you a tour of the clan's territory. It'll help you with your training and battle strategies," he said.

"Wow, you sure sound wise," Mosspaw laughed.

"Oh, I'm not," he said.

"But surely you are if you were assigned as deputy," Mosspaw pointed out.

"Maybe," Smokestar said. "I became leader when I had just become a warrior. The leader before me had been given a sign from StarClan showing me as the leader. I'm proud she chose me, but I still wonder if I made the right choice."

Mosspaw didn't reply, but continued walking. This was training! Not a trip to the elders' den.

Suddenly Smokestar stopped, almost causing Mosspaw to walk into him. Mosspaw turned his head, seeing patrols of cats go by.

"FoxClan," Smokestar said. "CloudClan is near death. Their clan is falling apart. A clan named NightClan did move into the forest though."

"What are the other clans like?" Mosspaw asked. "Who are their leaders?"

"Maybe you'll find out at the gathering," Smokestar said.

"You mean I can go?" Mosspaw gasped, bouncing up and down.

Smokestar nodded. "You need all the information you can get. Now, come on, let's look around the territory."

Smokestar showed Mosspaw around, showing him the best places to catch prey, where to find water, where the best battle fields were. He showed him the best climbing trees and best moss, taking up a lot of time.

"Now, we're going to learn how to *properly* give moss to the elders," Smokestar said.

Mosspaw nodded, watching Smokestar.

Smokestar grabbed a small piece of moss, lightly biting down on it, causing the water to spill out onto the forest floor. After he had done that a few times, he began to stomp on the moss, causing more water to come out. Then he repeated the two actions again and again until no more water spilled out.

"Now feel it," Smokestar instructed.

Mosspaw felt the moss, gasping at its softness and dryness. "I've never felt moss that dry and soft before!" he gasped.

Smokestar nodded. "A little trick," he smiled. "You are to provide a nest for Newfeather. She likes her nests nice and comfy, so do a good job. You must also pick ticks off of her when the time comes."

"Newfeather," Mosspaw said. "Is she that old calico she-cat?"

Smokestar nodded.

"I met her yesterday!" he gasped.

"Good," Smokestar said. "You'll know who she is. Now, show me how to gather moss and do it well."

Mosspaw nodded, pulling a large bunch of moss off of the tree and biting down into it, tasting the foul moss in his mouth. He spat it out, hacking.

"Lightly!" Smokestar said. "Chew it lightly!"

Mosspaw nodded, steadily beginning to lightly chew on it, water from the moss beginning to drip down his chin. After he got bored of chewing, he put it on the ground, jumping up and down on the moss.

"Stop!" Smokestar yowled. "You're going to have flat moss.

Lightly step on it."

Mosspaw nodded, trying to fluff the moss back up. The good news was, the bouncing had gotten some of the water to come out. The bad news was that the moss didn't seem like it would make a good nest.

Mosspaw kept trying to make the moss dry and soft, but it was a failure. He winced as Smokestar felt the moss. "Soggy. Honestly, Mosspaw. Did you listen to a word I said? Come on, it's getting late. I guess Newfeather will have to deal with that."

Mosspaw nodded, feeling ashamed. He hadn't meant to destroy the moss completely. He had just wanted to make it right. He sighed as he padded back into camp, going to the elders' den immediately.

"Oh, are you bringing me my nest?" Newfeather rasped.

Mosspaw nodded, dropping the flat and soggy nest at her feet.

Newfeather touched it. "What is this? You call this a piece of moss?!"

"Pipe down, Newfeather," Darkwhisper grumbled. "He's just started to learn. Let me feel it. It can't be as bad as it looks."

Mosspaw groaned as Darkwhisper felt it and shuddered. "Wow, it really is. Congratulations tom. You've gathered the worst moss ever. Just go dump it outside. Newfeather's old nest will have to do."

Mosspaw sighed, throwing the worn and soggy moss into the forest. He turned around, only to see Fernpaw staring at him.

"What's up?" she asked, her tortoiseshell ears pricking.

"Nothing really," Mosspaw sighed. "Darkwhisper just told me that I gathered the worst moss ever."

"Oh, don't take it too hard," Fernpaw said. "Darkwhisper's a

pain in the tail. That's all he does. Complain. You'll get better at it soon enough."

"I hope," Mosspaw sighed. "Smokestar thought I didn't listen to him."

"Who cares what Smokestar thinks? He's only your mentor."

"And leader," Mosspaw pointed out.

"Leader, mentor, it's the same. Just do better next time," Fernpaw said.

"Thanks," Mosspaw sighed. He padded off, only to be interrupted by Cottonnose's scream.

"SNOWTAIL'S KITS ARE COMING!" he yowled.

Cats rushed to the nursery while Mosspaw hesitatedly padded forward, unable to see anything over the big crowd.

Mosspaw turned, seeing a gray and white she-cat standing next to him, smiling at him. "Are you Snowtail's sister?"

The she-cat shook her head.

"Who are you then?" Mosspaw asked.

The she-cat did not speak and Mosspaw tilted his head. "Um hello? I asked you a question!"

A white she-cat with black spots spoke. "Oh don't mind Ivygaze. She was born mute. She can't speak."

"Oh," Mosspaw said. "Who are you?"

"Mousestripe," the she-cat said. "Smokestar's daughter."

"So you're Snowtail's sister?"

"Oh, StarClan, no! I'm *Lilywhisker's* daughter. Not that bird-brain's kit. My sister is Dawnpool. None of us were happy when we heard Wavestorm was having a second litter," Mousestripe said.

"Oh," Mosspaw said. "I'm so sorry."

"Don't be," Mousestripe said. "My father is a mouse-brain at times."

A yowl came from the nursery. "IT'S A TOM!"

Mosspaw stood, waiting to hear if any more kits would be born. Cats had begun to leave, thinking that was the only kit. Then another sound came. "A SHE-CAT!"

Mosspaw stood, waiting to see the brand new kits born to Snowtail and Cottonnose. Mosspaw turned to Mousestripe again. "Say, who is Ivygaze related to?"

"She's Cottonnose, Riverstream, and Blazeheart's sister. Daughter to Petalnose and Longtail," Mousestripe said.

Mosspaw froze. "D-did you say P-petalnose?"

"Yeah, why are you making such a big deal out of it?" Mousestripe asked.

"N-no reason," Mosspaw said.

He couldn't believe it! He had just found out who the four kits that Skycloud had raised were! Cottonnose, the father of Snowtail's kits, was Petalnose's son. Riverstream, he had never met her. Blazeheart, that tom who had yowled at him prior to his arrival. And Ivygaze. Four kits. *Wow, Skycloud must've been brave to watch all those kits* Mosspaw thought.

He neared the nursery, seeing Snowtail's two kits. He smiled, seeing a furry white tom with a black tail and a white she-cat with black paws.

"What are their names?" Mosspaw asked.

"The tom is Fuzzykit. The she-cat is Marshmallowkit," Snowtail said, purring at the kits.

Cottonnose nodded.

"Cottonnose, are you Petalnose's son?"

Cottonnose paused for a moment. "Yes...why does that interest you?"

"Because I heard my mother raised you and your siblings. I wanted to hear about it," Mosspaw said.

"Well, I'm sort of busy right now," Cottonnose laughed. "But you can stop by the warrior's den tomorrow and hear a story."

"Alright," Mosspaw smiled, padding off to the apprentice den.

Finally! Some of the truth would be unveiled!

Chapter 3

Mosspaw awoke bright and early to hear Cottonnose's story. He had to piece the truth together somehow and Cottonnose's story might just help with that.

He quietly stepped over the apprentices, trying not to disturb them. He padded outside, seeing a few warriors up already on dawn patrol. Mosspaw padded to the warriors den finding Cottonnose sitting outside of it, licking his paw.

"Cottonnose!" Mosspaw gasped.

He looked around and then noticed Mosspaw. "Oh, um, Mosspaw, right? Why are you here?"

"You said that you would tell me the story!" Mosspaw reminded him.

"Oh, yeah, that's right. I did say that. Well, I guess I could tell you. But come on, let's go outside the camp so we don't disturb the others," Cottonnose said, beginning to walk away.

Mosspaw nodded and followed after the large white tom until they came to a small spot in the forest.

"So you want to know about Petalnose?"

"Anything!" Mosspaw gasped. "Tell me all you know!"

"Well, okay," Cottonnose said. "See, I was born along with my siblings, Ivygaze, Blazeheart, and Riverstream. Ivygaze was born mute and Petalnose had a fit, but she grew to love the kit. Longtail was my father. He was actually much younger than my mother, but she didn't care."

"So how did Petalnose die?"

"I vaguely remember this," Cottonnose said. "But others

have greater memories of it. Well, when she was taking care of us, Longtail was leaving to BloodClan. Apparently he was of BloodClan descents or something. The whole clan was in chaos and others were betrayed and stuff. My mother, thinking she would be left again."

Mosspaw interrupted him. "Left again? What do you mean?"

"You never heard about Rockclaw and Mintfall?"

"Who?" Mosspaw asked.

"Well, Skycloud told us about this, but when Petalnose was an apprentice, she met a rogue named Rockclaw and became mates with him. It was all secretive and it was against the code, but she was doing a good job at hiding it. And then Petalnose found out she was expecting Rockclaw's kits and when she went to tell him, she found him with another she-cat. He said that he was mates with the she-cat now and he left Petalnose alone, her not even able to tell him about the kits. Then Petalnose gave birth to Mintfall. And then after Mintfall's birth she fell in love with Longtail and had her kits when Mintfall was becoming an apprentice."

"I never knew that!" Mosspaw gasped. "But continue the story."

"Okay, well Longtail left and Petalnose went after him. Apparently, Thorndapple, she's dead now, trapped her in a badger set and Petalnose was severely injured. Then Thorndapple brought her back into camp and finished her off. Skycloud stood by her side and Petalnose wanted to see Longtail before she died, but he wasn't fast enough and she died without him. Apparently she made Skycloud take care of us. I remember that night when my siblings and I were nestled in Skycloud's fur and she quietly comforted us. Skycloud raised us and told us stories. She was really great at raising us. Longtail never really visited us anymore, so Skycloud was really the only family we had," Cottonnose explained.

Mosspaw was shocked. He had never known about how Petalnose had betrayed her clan and then had two litters of kits. He hadn't known Skycloud was the only one who cared after her kits.

He was amazed.

"Well, thanks for the story," Mosspaw said. "I understand a little more now."

Cottonnose dipped his head and Mosspaw went off to find Smokestar to train. He padded into camp, seeing Smokestar looking around for him.

"I'm here, Smokestar!" Mosspaw said.

"Thank goodness," Smokestar said. "We'll be training with Fernpaw and her mentor, Waterdrop, today, alright?"

"Okay," Mosspaw said, padding into the forest with Waterdrop and Fernpaw.

"How's your apprentice training going so far?" Fernpaw whispered.

"Okay. You?"

"Good. I can't wait to be a warrior!" she breathed.

Waterdrop suddenly halted, Mosspaw bumping into her. Fernpaw stifled a giggle then pretended to act very serious again.

"We're going to practice tree climbing," Smokestar said.

Tree climbing. The one thing Mosspaw did not enjoy. He remembered that night he had ran and ran. Climbing trees scared him to death.

"Um, are you sure about this?" Mosspaw asked nervously.

"Don't worry. We'll help you out," Smokestar reassured him.

"Fernpaw, you'll go first," Waterdrop said.

Fernpaw nodded, beginning to dig her claws into the bark of the tree. She moved up quickly and swiftly, reaching a branch in the matter of seconds. She then arched her back and leapt, digging

her claws into the next branch.

"Very good, Fernpaw," Waterdrop said. "You'll be a warrior in no time!"

"Now your turn, Mosspaw," Smokestar said.

Mosspaw gulped and nodded, slowly edging forward. He climbed onto the first branch, then sunk his claws into the bark. He slowly climbed. At one point, his paw slipped.

"HELP! HELP! HELP!" he screeched. He regained his balance quickly. Embarassed, he didn't say anything else and continued climbing.

He was near another branch now and he carefully leapt, nearly missing the branch. He sat for a few seconds, breathing heavily.

"Can I come down now?" he asked.

"You're barely off the ground, Mosspaw! Keep going!" Smokestar yowled.

Mosspaw looked down. He was only a few feet up but to him, it looked like he was a few miles up. He gulped and turned away, continuing to climb slowly. He managed to get about halfway up and leapt onto another branch, only digging his claws in. "HELP!" he screeched, his claws digging into the branch and his feet dangling.

The cats rushed underneath of him.

"Let go!" Fernpaw called.

"Are you insane?! No!"

"Just do it!" Waterdrop hissed.

Mosspaw gulped. *Goodbye, SnowClan* he thought then let go, landing safely on Smokestar's back.

"Phew," Mosspaw said, relieved he was okay.

"That's enough tree climbing for today," Smokestar said. "Let's practice some hunting instead."

Relieved that the tree climbing session had ended, Mosspaw followed after Smokestar, making large noises as he bounced by.

"Walk quietly," Smokestar instructed. "You're going to scare away all the prey in the forest."

"Sorry," Mosspaw said.

They continued to search for prey, Waterdrop catching a rabbit while Fernpaw caught a fat squirrel.

Mosspaw searched around, spotting a mouse. He leapt quickly, the mouse escaping just in time.

"Mouse-dung!" he spat.

"Keep trying," Smokestar encouraged him.

Mosspaw continued to try, only catching a wimpy robin after failing many times. He didn't understand it! He had hunted so well during the journey. Why had he not hunted well now?

Mosspaw returned to camp with his robin, placing it on the fresh-kill pile and padding away, ashamed of his hunting lesson.

Not hungry, he padded into the apprentice den, resting his head on his paws. Then a thought suddenly occurred to him. The gathering was tonight and he should get rest! Smokestar promised he could come, right?

Happy to know he was going to the gathering, Mosspaw closed his eyes and napped, excited for the upcoming events.

Chapter 4

Mosspaw awoke, feeling Gorgepaw, another apprentice, poke him with his tail. "Time to leave for the gathering," the tom said.

Mosspaw nodded, rising from his nest and padding out of the den. Other cats stood as well, them awoken from their nap too. Mosspaw looked up, seeing the full moon shine overhead.

"Is everyone ready?" Smokestar asked.

Cats mewed and nodded in agreement and Smokestar began to lead them off.

Mosspaw searched the crowd, finding Fernpaw. He padded after her.

"Hey," she said.

"Hi," Mosspaw replied. "So what exactly goes on at this gathering?"

"Us clans gather together in peace and discuss the news in our clan. We also get to talk to the other cats. It's quite fun," Fernpaw said.

"It does seem fun," Mosspaw spoke as he walked along with the other cats.

There was a short bit of silence, then Mosspaw spoke again. "What clans live here, again?"

"NightClan and FoxClan. CloudClan recently was ruined, so now we only have two other clans with us. It's a change, but a good one. The forest was getting crowded," Fernpaw said.

Mosspaw nodded, beginning to scent the other cats. He turned, seeing a group of cats walk as well.

"NightClan," Fernpaw whispered and Mosspaw nodded.

Soon they arrived in a clearing where another clan sat. Mosspaw inferred that it was FoxClan since NightClan had arrived with them.

Mosspaw stood, not knowing what to do or where to go. Fernpaw seemed to notice that he had no idea what to do and she came over to him.

"Go and mingle with the other clans," she said, motioning him towards the cats.

Mosspaw nodded, walking into the crowd. He looked up, seeing a group of apprentices sitting down and chattering. Mosspaw padded over and the cats turned to look at him.

Mosspaw did not recognize any SnowClan scent. These were either NightClan or FoxClan cats talking.

"Hey, a SnowClan cat!" a brown tabby she-cat spoke, though annoyance was detected in her voice. "What's your name? You seem small. Are you a new apprentice?"

"My name is Mosspaw," he said. "What's yours?"

"Acornpaw," the tabby she-cat said. "A NightClan cat. This is my sister, Applepaw," she said, pointing to a ginger tabby she-cat. A gray tom stood next to her, staring at Applepaw. It was obvious that he was drooling over her.

"This," Acornpaw spoke, poking the tom who stopped gazing at Applepaw, "is Rabbitpaw."

"Oh, uh, hi," he said, staring back at the ginger she-cat.

Acornpaw looked down, saddened by him gazing at her. Mosspaw guessed that she loved the gray tom but he loved her sister.

Mosspaw craned his head, seeing the ginger she-cat facing away from Rabbitpaw, talking to another tom. When Applepaw

turned back, she would roll her eyes and turn away, obviously not liking that Rabbitpaw was into her.

"I'm going to leave now," Mosspaw said, turning away from the NightClan cats quickly.

No sooner than that did he run into another group of young apprentices. Their scents were different, them being FoxClan cats.

"Sorry!" Mosspaw said.

"Watch where you're going!" a young, white she-cat growled.

"Calm down, Frostedpaw," a ginger tom spoke. "Sorry, my sister's a little...grouchy. I'm Pumpkinpaw. My other sister, Lightpaw, is probably over here somewhere. You're new to SnowClan, aren't you? I haven't seen you before."

"Yeah, I'm Mosspaw," Mosspaw spoke.

"Well, why don't you sit with us for the gathering. I saw you with the NightClan cats earlier. They're pretty stupid and annoying," Pumpkinpaw said. "So, you excited that your kithood is over?"

"Um, what do you mean?" Mosspaw asked.

"I mean that you won't continue sleeping in that stupid nursery," Pumpkinpaw laughed.

"I didn't live in the nursery."

"You're a kittypet?!"

"No!" Mosspaw hissed. "No, I got lost, er well..." Mosspaw wasn't sure if he should tell the unknown cat his story.

"Er, well, what?"

"Well, my father died before I was born and my mother ran away from SnowClan to be with another cat and gave birth to me and then I had to journey all the way back here," he said quickly.

"Orphan, huh? Don't worry. I know how you feel. My mother died giving birth to me and my siblings."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Mosspaw said.

"Nah, it's fine. You didn't know," Pumpkinpaw said.

Mosspaw suddenly smelled a familiar scent behind him. He turned around, facing Fernpaw.

"Oh, hey," she laughed. "You found a friend."

Mosspaw nodded, glancing at Pumpkinpaw. Before either of them could speak, a yowl ran throughout the group of cats.

"Sh, it's starting," Frostedpaw hissed.

"Welcome to the gathering," Smokestar said, smiling before the cats. "We are privileged to welcome NightClan into the forest."

The NightClan cats yowled loudly and cheered.

"We mourn the loss of CloudClan, and hope they are able to recover," Smokestar said. "I'll start now."

Cats looked at Smokestar and Mosspaw smiled. Seeing Smokestar's white and black pelt shine in the moonlight made him smile for some reason. Maybe Mosspaw would be up there some day.

"SnowClan is doing very well now that green-leaf is almost here. We have five new warriors. Ashclaw, Cindertail, Thornfrost, Mousestripe, and Dawnpool."

Mosspaw watched as the five cats stood. He recognized Ashclaw and Cindertail as the cats who seemed to glare at him from time to time. He was still clueless to why.

As SnowClan's cheering settled down, Smokestar spoke again. "We also have three new apprentices. Darkpaw." The dark tom stood forward, smiling. "Sandpaw." The ginger she-cat warily stepped forward, looking down at her paws as the clan cheered.

"And we are pleased to welcome back Mosspaw." SnowClan cheered loudly though other clans seemed to be confused. What did Smokestar mean by welcome back?

"We are pleased to have so many kits at this time. We are also pleased to have NightClan in the same forest as us now. Speaking of NightClan, Cloudstar, would you like to speak?"

The white tom nodded, stepping forward. He had thick fur and his amber eyes shone brightly. "Thank you, Smokestar," he said. His voice was deep and he was obviously an older tom.

"NightClan is doing well in this forest. We are pleased by your hospitality. We have no other news at this point, but we appreciate your thought and concern for us," Cloudstar said, smiling, his white teeth showing. Something was right about this.

Next was Sunstar. Her bright ginger coat shone in the moonlight too. "FoxClan is also doing well. We have three new apprentices and several new warriors. Pumpkinpaw, Frostedpaw, and Lightpaw are now apprentices."

Mosspaw wathced as Frostedpaw and Pumpkinpaw stood up, then noticing the light ginger she-cat near them was Lightpaw, their sister.

"We have new warriors as well. They are Rosecloud, Treestep, Nightclaw, Lavenderwhisker, Violetflower, Chesnutfang, Willowfoot, and Redfur."

Wow, that's a lot of warriors Mosspaw thought, watching them stand up proudly and smile.

The gathering soon concluded and Mosspaw waved farewell to Pumpkinpaw, though he knew the next day Pumpkinpaw would be his enemy again. It was how the clan worked.

"How was your first gathering?" Fernpaw asked.

"Good," Mosspaw smiled, padding back into the woods.

Chapter 5

It had been a few days since the gathering and Mosspaw was getting used to SnowClan. He actually seemed to enjoy it. Though at times he missed Snakekit and Ginger. It seemed like no one understood.

He stood in the camp, sharing a squirrel with Fernpaw. The sun was slowly setting beyond the horizon and it had already started to get dark out.

Fernpaw pricked her ears.

"What?" Mosspaw asked, slowly chewing his squirrel.

"I thought I heard--" She was cut off as another yowl sounded.

"MY KITS ARE COMING! HELP ME!" Wavestorm hissed from the nursery.

Mosspaw got up and was about to follow the crowd when he noticed Fernpaw had not gotten up.

"Aren't you coming to see the new kits?" he asked.

"No," Fernpaw replied. "I've seen enough kit births. Go though. I'm sure there'll be some drama."

Mosspaw nodded and went off with the crowd. Smokestar was already inside the den and Featherwing, Snowtail's sister and Wavestorm's daughter, sat outside the den. Mosspaw looked around for Waterdrop but saw no sight of her.

"A TOM!" Spottedmask yowled.

"Congrats!" Featherwing mewed.

"Is that all?" Lilywhisker asked.

Featherwing ignored the she-cat and continued watching.

"ANOTHER TOM!" Spottedmask yowled. "THAT'S ALL!"

Mosspaw did the usual and waited for everyone to see. As Lilywhisker walked in, he swore he heard her murmur, "I wish these were my kits."

Mosspaw felt sympathy for the she-cat who's heart had been broken. He put a tail on her shoulder which cause her to zip around.

"I'm so sorry," Mosspaw said.

"Don't be," Lilywhisker snapped, walking into the nursery.

Mosspaw followed behind her and smiled at the two toms who laid by Wavestorm. One was a jet black with white paws and a white muzzle. The other was a gray tom whose chest was a creamy white.

"What are their names?" Lilywhisker asked.

"The black one is Crowkit. The gray one is Rockkit."

With nothing else to say, Lilywhisker exited.

"They're beautiful kits," Mosspaw said.

"Thank you," Wavestorm smiled. This seemed to be more of a natural smile, not the ones that Mosspaw had seen that looked as if they were fake and she was just hiding the pain.

Mosspaw gave a good-bye to Reedkit and his siblings who would be apprentices in a few days and checked up on Fuzzykit and Marshmallowkit. The two white-furred siblings were much now active and were adorable as well.

As Mosspaw exited, he saw Ashclaw and Cindertail looking at him again. Turning away quickly, he padded back over to Fernpaw.

"Why are Ashclaw and Cindertail always looking at me?" Mosspaw asked.

"Dunno. Maybe your half-siblings want to talk to you or something," Fernpaw spoke.

"H-half-siblings?" Mosspaw asked. He stiffened and shook. What? No. They couldn't have been his half siblings. There was no way. He was Skycloud's only kit.

"Yeah you know, Skycloud's other kits. I've heard Smokestar talk about it before."

Mosspaw was in shock. No, this wasn't happening.

"Over here, Fernpaw!" Tawnypaw yelled from the medicine cat den.

"Oh, got to go. Just talk to Ashclaw and Cindertail," Fernpaw said, leaving him behind.

With as much might as he could, Mosspaw slowly marched forward until he stood close to the two siblings.

"H-hi," he said, barely audible.

"Oh look, it's Mosspaw," Ashclaw rolled his eyes.

"I didn't know you guys were my half-siblings," Mosspaw spoke.

"You liar! You did know! You got the good life! We—" Ashclaw was cut off by Cindertail.

"Stop it, Ashclaw. He's telling the truth, poor little guy. You didn't know Skycloud had another mate and kits?"

"No...I thought I was her only kit," Mosspaw said.

"That's what we thought too," Ashclaw snapped.

"Huh? What do you mean?" Mosspaw asked.

"Skycloud ditched us and started a new family!" Ashclaw spat.

"No!" Mosspaw hissed, anger bubbling throughout him. "My father was killed by a rogue and that rogue captured us! And he wouldn't let us go! And then when he did, my mother knew she loved the rogue and brought me back! She never wanted to leave you! She told me to tell you that she was sorry."

"What? Is that all true?" Cindertail asked.

Mosspaw nodded and he felt as if he were about to cry. "Can you tell me your story now?"

"Why should we?" Ashclaw groaned.

Cindertail ignored her brother. "Our mother fell in love with a tom named Blacktail, but he died shortly before our birth. We were born and our mother met Mossclaw and fell in love with him. That's when she left."

"Your story sounds like mine," Mosspaw said. "I'm sorry your life was bad too." And with that he scurried off, scarred from all the information he heard.

He ran into the woods, grief and sorrow tearing him apart. How could his mother never tell him this? Why couldn't she tell him that he had half-siblings? Why couldn't she tell him why they glared at him? He didn't understand!

He sat in the woods, staring at the twigs on the forest floor. A single tear dripped down and coated them. Why? Why had she lied to him? He had more family! But they hated him.

He sighed and slowly paced around then sat again, dropping down onto the forest floor, resting his head on his paws.

He sat for awhile, sad and depressed.

After awhile, he heard footsteps and the cracking of branches. Mosspaw pricked his ears, looking around for the unknown noises.

"Hello?" he groaned.

"Mosspaw? What are you doing out here?!" Fernpaw asked.

"Fernpaw? Why-why are you here?"

"Because I saw you run off. What happened?"

"I-everything happened. I didn't know I had half-siblings and they seemed like they hated me...My life is terrible, Fernpaw," Mosspaw whimpered.

"No, it's not. You'll make new friends. I'm your friend," Fernpaw said.

"Really? I thought you were just being nice to me."

Fernpaw laughed. "Of course not. I know a good friend when I see one. Come on, let's head back."

"I don't know. I don't really want to," Mosspaw sighed.

"You want to stay out here after traveling in these woods a few days ago?" Fernpaw asked.

"No, not really," Mosspaw laughed. He rose to his feet. "Thanks, Fernpaw."

"Anytime," Fernpaw purred.

The two walked back, side by side, entwining their tails with each other. Mosspaw finally had found a friend.

Chapter 6

Mosspaw had been having a weird feeling for awhile now. And it was about Fernpaw. He didn't know why, but he couldn't get the she-cat's beautiful tortoiseshell pelt out of his mind. The way her green eyes sparkled and the way her laugh sounded like leaves falling from trees, it was beautiful.

Mosspaw wondered about Snakekit. He had never felt like this when he was with her. Did he really not love Snakekit?

Mosspaw shook his head.He knew he loved Snakekit and Snakekit loved him. But Snakekit was in StarClan now...

Mosspaw awoke to another beautiful spring day, listening to the songbirds sing. He didn't know how to approach Fernpaw. How could he? What if she didn't feel the same?

"Hey, Mosspaw!" her familiar voice rang from across the camp.

Mosspaw turned and padded over to the she-cat. The she-cat was bigger than him, but she was almost a warrior and Mosspaw would grow.

"Hey," Mosspaw replied quietly.

"Hey! Waterdrop wondered if you wanted to come hunting with us," Fernpaw spoke.

"Uh, I don't know. I'll have to ask Smokestar."

"Better ask him quick," Fernpaw replied. "He's about to do the apprentice ceremony for Petalstream's kits."

Mosspaw nodded, padding quickly over to the spotted tom. "Uh, Smokestar?"

"Mosspaw? I'm afraid we can't do training at this moment. I'm about to perform a ceremony," Smokestar spoke, glancing over the cats that passed him.

"Yes, but Fernpaw and her mentor asked if I wanted to come hunting with them," Mosspaw replied.

"Waterdrop? My daughter? Sure. I'll catch up when I can," Smokestar replied, walking near the rock that was in the center of camp.

"Thank you," Mosspaw replied, padding back over to Fernpaw. "When do we go?"

He was shushed by Fernpaw. "The ceremony is about to start!"

"ALL CATS OLD ENOUGH TO CATCH THEIR OWN PREY JOIN BENEATH THE HIGH ROCK FOR A CLAN MEETING!" Smokestar yowled.

Cats began to gather and Mosspaw couldn't help but smile at the four kits who bounced around the camp, trying to dodge licks from their mother.

Mosspaw turned, seeing Foxflame, the kits' father, stand, proud of his four kits.

Smokestar turned the kits and motioned them up onto the rock. Swiftkit ran up first, Larkkit following her brother. Reedkit hesitated a little, but followed. It was Littlekit who stood, frozen in fear. She turned and looked back at her mother who nodded her forward. With much courage, the little runt bursted up the rock and stood alongside her siblings.

"Swiftkit, Reedkit, Larkkit, and Littlekit have reached six moons, which means they are ready to become apprentices," Smokestar announced. "Swiftkit." The white and gray tom stood, staring at his leader. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Swiftpaw. Graystorm."

The dark gray tom with his leaf-green eyes walked forward,

dipping his head.

"Graystorm, you are strong and noble. Please teach everything you know onto Swiftpaw."

"I will do my best, Smokestar," Graystorm said, dipping his head and then running up towards Swiftpaw, touching noses with his apprentice.

"Larkkit," Smokestar spoke. The light ginger tabby she-cat edged forward, a smile lit up on her face. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Larkpaw. Blazeheart."

The muscular ginger tom padded forward, dipping his head to the leader.

"You are strong and a good fighter. Please teach this onto Larkpaw."

"I will, Smokestar," Blazeheart said, touching noses with the young apprentice.

"Reedkit." The brown tabby tom froze up, but with a little strength, he looked into Smokestar's eyes. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Reedpaw. Yarrowwhisker."

Mosspaw had never seen this tom before. He was pure black with one white ear. Dipping his head, he looked up at Smokestar.

"You are loyal and kind. Teach this onto Reedpaw."

"With all my might," the tom replied with his deep voice. He then touched noses with his apprentice.

Littlekit stood now, shaking from head to tail. Mosspaw turned, seeing Petalstream's expression. The cream cat was looking at her daughter, trying to make eye contact, but the little black kitten refused to look at her mother.

"Littlekit." The she-cat turned, still shaking. "From this day

forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Littlepaw. Cindertail."

Mosspaw growled a little when they called the she-cat's name. He was still furious with the way that Ashclaw and Cindertail had thought of his mother a few days previous. He hadn't spoken to his half-siblings since, and he didn't want to.

Cindertail seemed surprise at her name being called. She edged through the crowd and padded forward, bowing.

"You are kind and gentle, but you possess strength too. Teach this onto Littlepaw."

"I-I will," she stammered, touching noses with the young apprentice. Cindertail watched her turn and look at Yarrowwhisker.

They must be mates Mosspaw inferred.

"SWIFTPAW! LARKPAW! REEDPAW! LITTLEPAW!" The clan yowled. This was the first apprentice ceremony Mosspaw had ever witnessed, and he was surprised by how much noise the clan could make.

Mosspaw watched the apprentices exit, only to feel a tap on this shoulder. He turned around, gazing into Fernpaw's green eyes.

"We need to go," she said.

Mosspaw nodded, following after her and Waterdrop into the woods.

"How did you like your first ceremony?" Fernpaw asked.

"It was cool," Mosspaw replied.

"Squirrel!" Waterdrop hissed sharply, leaping into the air. She rose up a few seconds later with a dead squirrel in her jaws.

"How did you see that so quickly?" Mosspaw asked.

"Waterdrop and her siblings are really experienced. In fact,

they were made a warrior two moons early because they were so good," Fernpaw replied. "Isn't that right, Waterdrop?"

Waterdrop nodded, though she didn't speak, as if she didn't like talking about the subject.

They hunted for awhile, Fernpaw and Mosspaw sharing laughs, Waterdrop chiming in at times too. Smokestar never came, and Mosspaw felt a pang of dissapointment. His mentor had promised, hadn't he?

As they walked back to camp, Mosspaw couldn't help but get lost in Fernpaw's eyes again.

"What are you doing?" Fernpaw asked.

"Looking at you."

"Why?"

"Why shouldn't I?" Mosspaw asked.

Fernpaw laughed at the tom's comment. "Well, you shouldn't," she sighed. "Moonpaw says my pelt color is the color of mud."

"What? No!" Mosspaw gasped. "Your tortoiseshell pelt is really pretty."

"Not as pretty as Moonpaw's amazing calico pattern."

Mosspaw rolled his eyes. "Who cares what Moonpaw thinks? You're you, and that's all that matters. And your eyes, they're really pretty too. You're beautiful, Fernpaw."

Fernpaw stopped at his words. "You think so?"

"I know so," Mosspaw replied. There was that feeling again.

"Thanks," Fernpaw purred, lightly beginning to entwine her tail with his.

And Mosspaw didn't resist. He purred as well, smiling at the she-cat. But for some reason, he thought of Snakekit when he glanced at her, and it was hard to continue smiling. But then he thought of Fernpaw again, and Snakekit's memory seemed to vanish. He didn't want this moment to end.

Chapter 7

It had been a few sunrises after Mosspaw had realized that he had feelings for Fernpaw. He hung out with her more and more everyday. They were best friends, and Fernpaw was the only one that Mosspaw accepted since nearly everyone seemed to hate Mosspaw's guts. But Fernpaw would be a warrior soon, and Mosspaw was scared what would happen when that day did fall upon him.

Mosspaw stretched and padded out of the den, nearly running into the Reedpaw.

"Sorry, Reedpaw," Mosspaw said.

The newly apprentice smiled and padded off with his mentor.

Mosspaw looked up, noticing Cindertail padding around with her mate, Yarrowwhisker. A deep growl raged in Mosspaw's throat. He despised his half-siblings to a great extent, even more now after they had told the truth.

"Mosspaw!" Fernpaw's sweet tone distracted him.

Mosspaw turned away from his half-sister and turned towards Fernpaw. "Hey," he said smiling. "Are we going hunting?"

"Actually, I came here to tell you that we won't be able to go hunting anymore with our mentors."

Mosspaw was in utter shock. What did she mean? "W-what? Why?"

"I need to focus on my training. I'm going to be a warrior in less than a moon. It's really important, and I'm really sorry. I'll make it up to you. How about a moonlight stroll tonight?"

Mosspaw tried to ignore the pang of sadness that surged

through his veins. "S-sure. That'll be fine," he said with the best positive tone he could make.

Fernpaw smiled and padded off with Waterdrop while Mosspaw stood, waiting for Smokestar to finish up talking to Cloudfur.

"Are you ready?" Smokestar asked.

Mosspaw nodded.

"Where's Fernpaw?" Smokestar asked.

"She's focusing on training right now since she'll be a warrior soon," Mosspaw explained.

"Ah, well it's for the best then. I guess that gives us more one-on-one time. We'll practice some fighting moves today," the spotted tom said.

Even the news of fighting moves did not cheer Mosspaw up. He didn't want Fernpaw to become a warrior so soon. He wanted her to train by him until Mosspaw was a warrior too. But he knew not everything stayed the same, and Fernpaw would still hang out with him. Things wouldn't be too bad, or so he thought.

Mosspaw and Smokestar padded into the forest, the warm green-leaf sun shining down on the thick-furred toms.

"What fighting moves will we learn?" Mosspaw asked.

"Important ones," Smokestar said. "I feel that there is a battle coming soon, so we must be prepared."

"Against who?" Mosspaw asked.

"NightClan," Smokestar growled. "But that isn't important. We need to focus. We've already done dodging and pinning down. How about side-tackles?"

"Alright," Mosspaw said.

"Try to tackle me," Smokestar said. "Sheathe your claws though. I don't want to be in the medicine cat den all afternoon."

"I will," Mosspaw laughed. He suddenly sprang at Smokestar, but Smokestar had experience, and he leapt away right as Mosspaw landed on the ground.

"Ouch," Mosspaw groaned, getting up from the dirt floor.

"Quicker," Smokestar said.

Mosspaw nodded and launched again, only being able to hit Smokestar's hind leg. But this did not do much though, and Smokestar was still able to run off.

"Try a sneak attack," Smokestar said. Without warning, he had leapt into the air and knocked Mosspaw onto the ground. "Like that."

Mosspaw groaned and stretched his sore muscles. He kept his eyes fixed on Smokestar and his movement. If Smokestar moved by the time he landed, then Mosspaw should wait until he was distracted.

Mosspaw closed his eyes, then leapt, rolling into the large tom and knocking him to the ground. "How was that?" Mosspaw asked.

"Fantastic!" Smokestar exclaimed. "You're doing very well, Mosspaw. I'm glad you're my new apprentice."

Mosspaw smiled. Was this what it was like to finally be accepted? "Thanks," he replied. "And...I'm glad to have you as my mentor."

Smokestar smiled. "Well, let's continue to work on the tackling."

And so they did. The two worked late into the orange sky, and when pink clouds stretched across and Mosspaw's stomach was about to die from hunger, they headed back to camp.

Fernpaw as already waiting for Mosspaw with a robin which she pushed to him.

"Thanks," Mosspaw said. "I am starving!"

"Long day, huh?" Fernpaw asked.

Mosspaw nodded, biting into the delicious bird. "How was your training?" he asked.

"Good," Fernpaw replied. "I totally surprised Waterdrop with my fighting moves. I can't wait until I'm actually a warrior!"

"Me too," Mosspaw said quietly. "Have you had anything to eat?"

"Moons ago," Fernpaw laughed. "You went really late with Smokestar. Cloudfur was beginning to worry."

"It was just a lot of training," Mosspaw said. "I learned a lot of valuable fighting moves. Maybe I'll get to use them soon."

"For what?" Fernpaw asked.

"Oh, uh." Mosspaw didn't know what to say. Should he tell Fernpaw of Smokestar's feeling of an upcoming battle with NightClan? "On you!" Mosspaw laughed, springing at Fernpaw.

Fernpaw fell into the fresh-kill pile, meat getting stuck in her fur. "Hey! Your turn!" she laughed, tossing Mosspaw into the pile.

"Will you kits get out of our food?!" Ashclaw growled.

"Sorry, we were just having fun," Fernpaw said.

"Some of us want to eat you know," Ashclaw argued.

Mosspaw didn't speak, but just growled at the tom. He then got up and shook the meat out of his fur, a piece of rabbit landing on Ashclaw. Mosspaw laughed to himself as the tom shrieked.

"Moonlight walk now?" Mosspaw asked Fernpaw.

The she-cat nodded. "I think right now is a good time," she said, rushing with him quickly out of camp and into the forest.

As they walked, Mosspaw gazed up at the stars, smiling at how many there were and how bright they shone.

"You should've seen them at the top of a mountain," Mosspaw told Fernpaw. "They were absolutely beautiful."

"You've gone to the mountains?!" Fernpaw gasped.

"How do you think I got here?" Mosspaw laughed. They suddenly locked eyes, but Fernpaw turned away. With a smile, Mosspaw tagged with his paw. "Tag!"

"Oh no you don't!" Fernpaw laughed. The two raced through the forest, their laughter filling the nighttime air. Crickets chirped and owls hooted around them, and Mosspaw felt happy.

As his pace slowed, he collapsed into the grass, listening to the green-leaf sounds. Fernpaw collapsed next to him, touching him with her paw. "Tag," she whispered.

Mosspaw laughed and gazed at the stars once more. He remembered how Snakekit would sit here with him and do this. But Snakekit wasn't with him anymore. She was in the stars as was his parents. But it was okay because Fernpaw was next to him now and he couldn't be any happier.

"Didn't you say you traveled with another cat?" Fernpaw asked.

"Yeah," Mosspaw sighed, thinking of Snakekit. "She was my best friend. But that doesn't matter anymore because it's just you and me and the forest."

Fernpaw smiled and licked the tom's cheek.

Mosspaw felt a mixture of love and excitement at her small gesture. With a wide grin on his face, he poked the she-cat. "Tag!"

he laughed.

And the two continued to run and play through the night in the everlasting woods. Mosspaw never wanted the night to end.

Chapter 8

It had been a week since the moonlight walk in the woods, an event Mosspaw would remember as one of the happiest moments ever.

Green-leaf had fully arrived in SnowClan, and Mosspaw was glad. Now the clan had copious amounts of prey and water, plus, queens would be expecting kits soon.

Fernpaw had tried to hang out with Mosspaw as best as she could, and Mosspaw appreciated that. He too was busy with training, and though they hung out less and less, it didn't bother him.

Mosspaw padded towards Smokestar, wondering what they would learn in training that day.

"Mosspaw, you've trained long and hard these past few sunrises," Smokestar spoke. "Why don't you take the day off?"

"Are you sure?" Mosspaw asked. "I can train!"

"But I can't," Smokestar laughed. "Go on. We'll continue training tomorrow."

Mosspaw felt weird about taking a day off, but he didn't argue. He was hoping to catch Fernpaw before she left with Waterdrop.

Mosspaw spotted the speckled she-cat right by her mentor, and he quickly zoomed off to catch her.

"Hi, Fernpaw!"

Fernpaw turned. "Oh, hey, Mosspaw! I'm sorry, I can't hang out today. My warrior ceremony is getting closer each day. Waterdrop and I have to practice. My evaluation will be soon."

"Oh, I know," Mosspaw said. Dissapointed, he shuffled his paws. "Well, maybe I'll catch you later."

Fernpaw nodded. "Bye, Mosspaw!"

Mosspaw padded off, wondering what he would do. Most of the apprentices were training, and the warriors were busy too.

"The nursery!" he decided.

Mosspaw padded into the nursery and smiled at the kits that played and tussled with each other.

"Hello, Mosspaw," Wavestorm said, welcoming him into the nursery.

"Smokestar gave me the day off. Is it alright if I play with the kits?" he asked.

"Sure," Snowtail said. "Fuzzykit, Marshmallowkit, you've got a playmate."

The two white kittens gazed up at Mosspaw. "You're big," Marshmallowkit squeaked.

Mosspaw laughed. "Where's Crowkit and Rockkit?"

"Here we are!" Crowkit squeaked, peaking out from Wavestorm. Rockkit hid behind Wavestorm as well, but he soon peaked out as well.

"Wow, Marshmallowkit. You're the only she-kitten in the nursery," Mosspaw realized.

"It's really annoying," the white she-cat complained. "But Applewhisker's kits will be born soon. Maybe I'll have a playmate."

"You don't like us?" Rockkit asked.

"No, I do!"

As Rockkit and Marshmallowkit began to argue, Mosspaw

turned towards Fuzzykit and Crowkit. "What do you guys want to play?"

"You can be a NightClan cat!" Fuzzykit suggested. "And we're brave SnowClan warriors."

"Okay," Mosspaw spoke. With his best deep voice, he began to stomp around. "Grrr! I'm Cloudstar, leader of NightClan! I'm coming to eat you!"

"No you won't! For I'm Fuzzystar of SnowClan!"

"And I'm Crowpelt! Deputy!" Crowkit hissed.

The two toms leapt onto Mosspaw, and Mosspaw dramatically fell down. "Oh, you've got me!"

"We did it!" Fuzzykit screeched.

"Take that, stupid NightClan cat!" Crowkit hissed.

Mosspaw laughed and got up. He was about to ask to play again when Smokestar began to yowl.

"Must be a meeting," he said.

Mosspaw left the nursery and padded outside to see Cindertail and Yarrowwhisker standing on the large rock with Smokestar.

Mosspaw was confused. Why were they standing there?

"Cats of SnowClan," Smokestar began. "I bring joyous news to all of you. Cindertail is expecting Yarrowwhisker's kits."

Cats cheered at the news of new warriors. Mosspaw stood though, not terribly happy. Cindertail and Ashclaw hated him, and now that Cindertail was expecting kits, Mosspaw couldn't hang out in the nursery anymore. Not with her around.

As Cindertail padded down, many cats congratulated her, including Ashclaw, her brother. Mosspaw let out a low growl, then

padded back away into the apprentice den.

The only cat who was in there was Littlepaw, and she didn't move or make a sound when Mosspaw entered.

"Hi," Mosspaw said.

Littlepaw's eyes got wide. "Oh, oh, hi. S-sorry. Is this your nest?"

"No, that's not my nest."

"I'll move anyway," she said quietly.

"No, it's fine. Why are you in here anyway?"

"Cindertail told me I should not train for a few sunrises. I sh-should relax. But she-she's expecting kits now, s-so I'll probably never train with her," she mumbled.

"Why?"

"T-training hasn't been g-going well for me."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm so small," she whimpered. "I'm not the best hunter, or fighter, or gatherer of moss. I'm terrible!"

"I'm sure you can find something," Mosspaw reassured her.

"I hate being the runt of the litter," she whispered. "Everyone expects that I can't do stuff, but I can! No one will even try to help me with my training."

"If you need help, I can teach you," Mosspaw offered.

"Oh, no, no. It's fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'll figure it out on my own." The little black she-cat then scampered out of the den quickly, leaving Mosspaw alone.

"Well that was weird," he muttered to himself.

Mosspaw napped for the remainder of the day, only stepping outside of the den when Fernpaw returned from her training session.

"Hey, Fernpaw! I've been waiting all day to—"

"Sorry, I'm too tired. Maybe tomorrow, Mosspaw."

Mosspaw was hurt. With a sigh, he padded back to the apprentice den, not even getting a piece of prey to eat. He then closed his eyes, and tried to fall asleep.

Chapter 9

A few days had passed, and Fernpaw had continued to distance herself from Mosspaw to "work on her training". Mosspaw had been sorrowful and angry the first day she had rejected him, but now he barely cared anymore.

I don't love Fernpaw, he thought. *I have to work on training.*

He awoke in his nest, glancing around. Fernpaw had already left the den.

Stop thinking about her, he thought. *She's none of your concern.*

With that, he stretched, padding out of the apprentice den. Smokestar was already up, sharing a squirrel with Cloudfur, his deputy and brother.

"Oh, there you are, Mosspaw," Smokestar said, glancing up at the tom.

"Are we ready to train?" Mosspaw asked. *Focus on training, focus on training.*

"Are you sure you don't want to get something to eat first?" Smokestar asked.

"I'm fine," Mosspaw said. "Please, can we just start training. I want to be the best warrior ever in SnowClan!"

"It takes a lot of time...and you need to keep up your energy," Smokestar said, pushing a mouse towards him.

Mosspaw groaned, gobbling the mouse up quickly. He was done within seconds, waiting only now for Smokestar.

"Boy, do you have an enthusiastic apprentice," Cloudfur laughed.

Smokestar nodded, rising from the ground. "All right, let's go," he grumbled.

Mosspaw bounced up and down, following Smokestar out into the forest where they would begin to train.

"So, what are we going to learn today?" Mosspaw asked, excitement bursting through him.

"Patience," Smokestar said.

"Huh?"

"Becoming a warrior, catching prey, learning moves, it all takes patience. Something you lack," Smokestar said, looking straight at Mosspaw.

"I'm patient!" Mosspaw argued.

Smokestar laughed. "No, you aren't," he said, swaying his tail as he walked away. Mosspaw followed, catching up to him.

"I am patient!"

Smokestar did not say anything, but instead stopped several pawsteps away from a rabbit.

"I'll get it," Mosspaw whispered.

"No, you must use patience. The rabbit is coming in this direction. If you go after it now, you'll scare it away."

"Not if we angle around it. We could surround it, so that way it couldn't escape!" Mosspaw pointed out.

"Perhaps, but this is a lesson you need to know," Smokestar instructed.

Sighing, Mosspaw and Smokestar sat motionless in the forest as the rabbit slowly made its way near them. Each second felt like an eternity, and it was as if the rabbit refused to move.

"Can't we just go after it?" Mosspaw groaned.

"No," Smokestar said.

Sighing, they waited longer and longer. Finally, Mosspaw couldn't take it anymore. He leapt at the rabbit, beginning to chase after it.

The rabbit, scared and frightened, ran away from the unpatient Mosspaw, squirming into a small hole.

"Fox dung!" Mosspaw spat, clawing at the hole.

"If you had patience, you'd be able to get that rabbit," Smokestar grumbled, padding past Mosspaw. "I say we work on some battle moves right now. Do you agree?"

Mosspaw nodded, padding away from the rabbit hole that concealed the prey inside.

The two padded through the forest, Mosspaw keeping his eyes out for any sign of prey that he could catch...without waiting for it.

As they came to a clearing, Smokestar stopped. "NightClan," he grumbled.

Mosspaw wriggled his nose at the horrible smell of the NightClan cats. "Why is their scent all over here? I don't see any cats."

"No, they're all gone," Smokestar said. "I should've known. They've been in this clearing, catching prey no doubt. They've been wanting this clearing for awhile now, for hunting purposes. It seems that they've ignored the borders."

Mosspaw unsheathed his claws. "Stupid mouse-brains! What are you going to do about it, Smokestar?"

"Nothing for now," Smokestar said. "We'll redo the borders, and if they cross it again, we'll confront them."

They walked through the clearing, marking the borders once more. Mosspaw growled as he saw the bones of the prey that they had caught. Thieves.

I'll have to tell Fernpaw about this, Mosspaw thought. He then shook his head. No, Fernpaw didn't want to be around him anymore, and he didn't care about her anymore.

After marking the borders, Smokestar decided to stay in the clearing with Mosspaw, just in case any more NightClan cats wanted to show up to steal more prey.

They began to practice fighting moves, mostly just practicing old ones that Mosspaw had learned, though Smokestar taught Mosspaw a few more as well.

"What happens if NightClan shows up? A battle?"

"I hope not," Smokestar growled. "Now come on. Let's see your attack moves."

Mosspaw nodded, leaping at Smokestar. Smokestar dodged, Mosspaw landing on the ground beside him. Mosspaw then rolled over, beginning to claw at his paws, knocking Smokestar down. Before he could get up, however, Mosspaw stood up on top of him, claiming victory.

"Marvelous!" Smokestar congratulated him.

Mosspaw smiled, getting off the tom. "Do you think I'd do well in a real battle?"

"Maybe," Smokestar said. "Let's just hope you never have to."

"But isn't that the real reason we become warriors?" Mosspaw asked. "To battle against one another?"

"No," Smokestar replied. "The *real* reason we become warriors is to protect our clanmates. Battles may be fought, but it is out of the loyalty to our clan, not just the fun of it. Battles are terrifying, Mosspaw, and you'll never know how terrifying you are

until you experience them."

"Have you ever been in a battle, Smokestar? I'm sorry, that's a silly question," Mosspaw said.

"Several, actually," Smokestar said. "But my first battle was the worst. You've heard those kit stories about Moonstar and MoonClan, have you not?"

"Oh, I've heard them," Mosspaw said. "Those are real?"

"Yes," Smokestar replied. "The battle against MoonClan happened when I was only a young apprentice, around your age. It was terrifying. Those cats were blood thirsty and cruel. Unlike regular clan cats, they would kill any cat in their way. I had several wounds, though I survived. My littermate was not so lucky."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Mosspaw said. "I didn't know." There was a split pause, then Mosspaw spoke again. "Did my mother do well in the battle?"

Smokestar stiffened. "Yes, yes she did. She could not rescue my sister, but she did bury her before she became crowfood."

"Were you in a different litter than Skycloud?"

"Yes," Smokestar replied. "My siblings and I were the younger litter. Skycloud, Petalnose, and Cloudfur were the older litter. We both have the same parents, just different litters."

Mosspaw's question had finally been answered, but he had began to question Smokestar's past. Smokestar had already mentioned that his sister died, but he had said siblings in his litter, not sibling. Did he have more littermates that died? Or were they still alive? Mosspaw decided it was best to stop asking questions.

"Shall we train now?"

Mosspaw nodded. They trained throughout the day, Mosspaw attempting to master his moves. There was no sign of any NightClan cat in the clearing for they had probably seen Mosspaw and Smokestar and were smart enough to stay away.

At the end of the day, the two headed back to camp, and Mosspaw anxiously looked around for Fernpaw. He spotted her sharing a squirrel with Waterdrop, and it sounded like they were discussing training.

Stop thinking about her, Mosspaw thought.

Sighing, he padded back into the apprentice den, lying down in his nest. He just wished that Fernpaw- why couldn't he stop thinking about Fernpaw?

He closed his eyes, ignoring his growling stomach. *I wish Snakekit was here,* he thought. *I wish Ginger was here, Skycloud, Mossclaw, everyone...I wish everyone was still alive.* More thoughts consumed him until he finally fell into a blissful sleep.

Chapter 10

"Mosspaw, Mosspaw, wake up!" Fernpaw's voice cooed as Mosspaw awoke. The sun filtered through the den, shining directly on Fernpaw as if she were a StarClan cat.

"W-what? What is it?"

"Smokestar's putting us on patrol today," Fernpaw announced.

"Oh, okay," Mosspaw said, getting up from his nest. *That's really nice that Fernpaw woke me up,* he thought. *No, stop thinking about her,* he thought again.

Padding out into the sunlight, Mosspaw realized it was only sunrise and that the cats were heading out on morning patrol. Moonpaw had been put on patrol too with her mentor, Featherwing.

Fernpaw padded over towards Waterdrop while Mosspaw spotted Smokestar near the head of the patrol. Leaving Fernpaw and Moonpaw, he padded over towards Smokestar.

"Ah, there you are, Mosspaw," Smokestar smiled. "Is everyone here then?"

"Yes," Waterdrop replied.

As they took off, Mosspaw stayed back a little to walk by Moonpaw and Fernpaw. The two she-cats talked excitedly about their warrior ceremony and exams that would take place soon, and Mosspaw felt anything but included.

As they walked, he looked around, spotting that nearly every cat was chatting while he was the only one padding alone, just watching others talk.

As they walked, Moonpaw suddenly looked over, spotting

Mosspaw. "Oh, hey, Mosspaw!" she spoke, her green eyes gleaming. "I didn't know you were here. Fernpaw and I were just talking about what it would be like when we're warriors!"

"It's so exciting!" Fernpaw squealed.

"Yeah, sure is," Mosspaw sighed.

As the two she-cats continued to talk about all the exciting things they would do when they were warriors, Mosspaw glanced around, hoping to find some sort of prey to impress Smokestar.

As they neared the clearing where Smokestar had scented the NightClan cats, a suddenly yowl split through the air.

Mosspaw turned, seeing Cloudstar, the leader of NightClan, with an army of NightClan warriors, all lined up against the clearing.

"SMOKESTAR!" Cloudstar hissed, his yellow eyes glaring at Smokestar.

Smokestar growled, stepping forward. "What is it you want, Cloudstar?"

"This clearing, of course," Cloudstar growled back. "You barely use it."

"You have plenty of prey, Cloudstar! What more does your clan need?!"

"There's never enough prey to go around, especially during leaf-bare," the deputy, Stormfur, spat.

"NIGHTCLAN! ATTACK!" Cloudstar hissed.

Yowls of cats split through the air, and SnowClan began to run towards the NightClan cats. Mosspaw glanced around, realizing there were more NightClan cats than SnowClan cats. It was a lost cause.

Smokestar must've noticed this too, for when he looked at

Mosspaw, he began to speak. "Go run back to camp! Tell them that NightClan is attacking!"

"But..." He couldn't leave Fernpaw all alone with these cats. What if she got injured? Or what if she...No, Mosspaw wouldn't think about that. "I will!" Mosspaw said, turning around.

As he soared through the forest, he couldn't help but think of that night when the fire had blazed through the woods. He couldn't help but think of his mother and Tooth who could not move forward, for only Mosspaw could. And Mosspaw raced and raced, like he had done when the fire was right on his tail.

This time, however, he got to his destination further, arriving back in camp within a few minutes.

Out of breath, he shouted, "NIGHTCLAN IS ATTACKING THE CLEARING!"

Cats' eyes widened, and Cloudfur immediately began ruling cats out who would help with the fighting.

The cats gathered quickly, and they all ran back into the woods, Mosspaw leading the way as they came to the clearing.

As cats ran forward to join the fight, Mosspaw stood and watched, seeing the blood fall on the grass, seeing the cats fight and claw at each other. He had never seen so much hatred in one place.

Suddenly, he was knocked over by a NightClan cat. Rabbitpaw! The cat he had seen at the gathering.

Oh, but this cat was no longer his friend, this was his enemy. Mosspaw hissed at him, knocking the large tom over.

The gray tom struggled underneath him, and Mosspaw slashed at his pelt, hissing and screeching at the tom.

As soon as Rabbitpaw had squirmed out from under him, he ran off, blood dripping off his pelt.

Mosspaw glanced up, noticing a large she-cat attacking

Fernpaw. "FERNPAW!" Mosspaw shrieked, running towards her.

As Mosspaw dashed towards her, he suddenly realized how much he cared for Fernpaw and how much he truly loved Fernpaw. He couldn't deny it anymore. He loved her.

Suddenly, the she-cat swiped at Fernpaw's pelt, and Fernpaw began to stagger, falling over unconscious as her wounds began to bleed over the forest floor.

"NO!" Mosspaw hissed, leaping at the she-cat. He struck his claws against her throat. The she-cat gasped in pain, and Mosspaw heard a yowl behind him.

Letting the she-cat go, Mosspaw turned, seeing Graystorm, one of the senior warriors. "No, Mosspaw! We don't kill!"

Mosspaw sighed, looking down at his bloodstained paws. He was in such shock that this cat had harmed Fernpaw that...he had forgotten the warrior code. He looked up, seeing the she-cat stagger away, though she did not fall and die like Mosspaw had thought.

He ran to Fernpaw's side, licking her affectionately. He then slowly dragged her away from the battle scene, placing her on the other side of a bush where she would not be harmed. He stared at the unconscious she-cat one more time, then whispered, "I promise I'll come back."

He ran back to the battlefield, noticing Stormfur fighting some of the other SnowClan cats. He gazed at Stormfur, noticing the large amounts of wounds on his pelt, but the tom continued to fight.

Dodging a cat from time to time, Mosspaw watched as Stormfur ran from the SnowClan cat, falling straight into Featherwing and Waterdrop.

This was the first time Mosspaw had seen the two sisters working together. They attacked the tom, hissing and clawing at his already-bloody pelt.

Stormfur attempted to put up a good fight, but soon he ran off, disspearing into some trees.

Mosspaw turned, seeing Cloudstar and Smokestar fighting and clawing at each other.

"YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME, SMOKESTAR?!" Cloudstar hissed.

"WE ALWAYS WILL!" Smokestar hissed in return. "I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO SURVIVED IN MY LITTER, CLOUDSTAR!"

"YOUR KITHOOD IS NOT A CONCERN TO ME!" Cloudstar spat in return, clawing at the tom. He had pinned Smokestar down, his claw raised over his throat. Before he could claw at Smokestar, however, a wail came from Silverstripe, a NightClan warrior.

The silver she-cat was holding a body, screeching. Suddenly, Mosspaw recognized who the cat was. It was Stormfur.

"STORMFUR IS DEAD!" she wailed.

Suddenly, NightClan cats gasped, glaring at Featherwing and Waterdrop.

"MURDERERS!" Silverstripe hissed, striding towards Featherwing and Waterdrop. She attempted to lash at them, but was held back by another NightClan warrior.

"I'LL KILL YOU!" she hissed. "YOU'VE KILLED MY MATE! I'LL KILL YOU!"

Featherwing and Waterdrop stood in fear, and Mosspaw knew that the silver she-cat was not joking around. If she wasn't being held back, she would surely kill Featherwing and Waterdrop.

Smokestar suddenly pushed Cloudstar off of him and hissed at the tom. "If your two SnowClan cats had not killed my deputy, we would've won! NIGHTCLAN, RETREAT!" Cloudstar hissed.

In a flash, the NightClan cats scampered away, Silverstripe carrying her mate's dead body.

As they disappeared, cheers erupted from the SnowClan cats. "WE WON!" they shouted.

Mosspaw turned, seeing Featherwing and Waterdrop. They were anything but happy. Obviously they were going to get some type of punishment...maybe even exile. Would Smokestar really do that to his two daughters?

Suddenly, Mosspaw remembered Fernpaw, and he ran towards Waterdrop. "Fernpaw is injured! I hid her behind the bush!"

Waterdrop quickly followed, and they headed behind the bush, finding the still-unconscious Fernpaw. Her wounds had stopped some, but she still needed help.

"I'll take her back," Waterdrop said, grabbing the she-cat.

"Be careful," Mosspaw whispered as she laid Fernpaw on her back and began to walk away with Featherwing.

Mosspaw stayed back and waited for Smokestar who had wounds of his own too. Mosspaw looked down at his own body, only finding minor scratches. Had he really just survived his first battle?

"I didn't know you were the only one that survived in your litter," Mosspaw admitted.

"Well, I was the only one," Smokestar replied.

"You said you had siblings, but you only mentioned one. What were their names, Smokestar? If you don't mind and all."

Smokestar stopped in his tracks, but then began to pick up his pace again. "There was Mousekit. She-she was killed when we were kits. MoonClan had spread throughout the forest, and my ex-mate, Lilywhisker, and I wanted to fight them. Mousekit didn't want to come, but we dragged her along. The tom tried to kill me...but Mousekit stopped him, and she died because of it. Mousekit was always annoying and grumpy, and I wish I had known how much she cared for me."

"I'm so sorry," Mosspaw said.

"There was Oceanpaw as well. She showed up after Mousekit's birth. Oceanpaw and my father had been separated from my mother, sister, and I. We were born in a different clan, you see. Oceanpaw showed up with Wavestorm. Apparently they had gone on a long journey together. But Oceanpaw died in the battle of MoonClan."

"Wait, you were born in a different clan?"

"ForestClan. My mother and father lived there. When my mother had her first litter, the one with your mother in it, she traveled to SnowClan, leaving her mate behind. But Olivetail visited her from time to time, and she then was expecting another litter. Scared of MoonClan, she ran off to ForestClan to safely have us, leaving your mother and her siblings behind. Then a fire came in ForestClan, and that's how they were separated. My father died in the fire, leaving Oceanpaw alone, but my mother got Mousekit and I safely to SnowClan where she waited for my father and sister's return..."

"Oh, sort of sounds like me, I guess. With the fire and journey and all."

Smokestar laughed. "Sort of." He looked up, seeing the cats walking into the camp. "Well, I better get to Spottedmask. These wounds won't heal themselves."

He then padded away into the medicine cat den, leaving Mosspaw to worry about Fernpaw.

He waited outside the medicine cat den, and after the cats with serious injuries had been treated, the minor ones began to come in, and Mosspaw was the first to come.

"Just a few, Mosspaw?"

"That's right," Mosspaw replied. He watched as Spottedmask gently applied medicine to his wounds. There was not even a sting. She really was the best medicine cat.

Tawnypaw worked on some other cats, and when Mosspaw was done, he looked over at Fernpaw who still slept.

"Can I go look at Fernpaw?" he asked.

Spottedmask nodded, and Mosspaw padded over towards her. Sighing, he laid down next to her. "Oh, Fernpaw. Please wake up," he whispered. He suddenly felt pawsteps behind him, and he turned, seeing Tawnypaw.

"Will she be alright?" he asked.

"Yes," Tawnypaw replied. "She'll be fine. You must care about her very much."

"I do," Mosspaw replied.

"I'll let you know when she wakes up," Tawnypaw said.

"Thank you." He then padded out of the medicine cat den into the apprentice den. The other apprentices began to ask about the battle, but Mosspaw was too tired and worried to tell any stories about it, so he shooed them away and attempted to rest.

Chapter 11

The next day was cloudy and cold, an unusual event in the beginning season of green-leaf, though it was probably just a left over storm from new-leaf. The sky seemed to shadow the events that had taken place the day before, and Mosspaw groaned as he got out of his warm nest, padding into the windy camp.

He looked up, seeing Smokestar talking to Waterdrop and Featherwing. They were most likely talking about the death of Stormfur. Mosspaw knew the two sisters hadn't killed him on purpose though. He had wandered off before Silverstripe had found him.

Smokestar caught his eye, said a word to the two, then padded off towards Mosspaw. "We're taking a break from training today. Everyone is. We need to recover from the battle."

"But I feel fine. Spottedmask fixed me up just fine," Mosspaw argued.

"Get some rest, Mosspaw," Smokestar grumbled, padding away back to his daughters.

Sighing, Mosspaw decided to check the medicine cat den, though Tawnypaw had not mentioned anything to him about Fernpaw waking up.

Mosspaw padded in, seeing several cats awake and moaning, Tawnypaw and Spottedmask tending to their wounds. Tawnypaw looked up, staring at Mosspaw.

"Fernpaw?" he asked.

Tawnypaw nodded, pointing to the black tortoiseshell who lay in the corner of the den, fast asleep.

"Did she ever wake up?" Mosspaw asked, Tawnypaw

following him over to her.

"Once during the night, but it was a short amount of time. She hasn't woken since. Her wounds are healing though," Tawnypaw spoke. "I'll leave you with her."

The calico then padded away, leaving Mosspaw alone with Fernpaw. Mosspaw sighed, lightly stroking the sleeping Fernpaw with his tail.

"Oh, Fernpaw," he muttered. "Why won't you wake up?"

He must've stood by her side for hours while the other cats were allowed to leave. Only a few remained as it neared the middle of the day, and Mosspaw still stood in the medicine cat den.

"You might want to leave now," Spottedmask spoke.

"I don't want to leave Fernpaw," Mosspaw argued.

"Look, we'll let you know when she wakes up, okay?" Spottedmask told him.

Suddenly, Fernpaw's bright green eyes shot open, and she glanced around, staring directly at Mosspaw. "Mosspaw? Wh-where am I? The battle!" she gasped, standing up. Her legs were wobbly though, and she ended up sitting back down.

"You're fine, Fernpaw," Tawnypaw reassured her. "I was wondering when you'd wake up completely."

"How long have I been asleep?" Fernpaw asked.

"About a day," Spottedmask replied.

"Did we win?" Fernpaw asked.

Mosspaw nodded. "Yeah, we did, Fernpaw! Er, well, not in a good way I guess." He quickly explained the death of Stormfur and how everyone blamed Featherwing and Waterdrop. He also explained how she had been attacked and how he had hid her in a bush.

"Gee, thanks," Fernpaw spoke. "I think I can get to my feet now." She slowly got up, managing to stand. She was a bit shaky, but she was soon able to walk around a little. "I need to go speak to Moonpaw," she said, exiting the den.

"Come back for more herbs!" Spottedmask yowled as she exited.

Mosspaw followed Fernpaw as she headed to the apprentice den. He entered after her, the apprentices cheering to see that Fernpaw was alive and healthy. "Hey, Moonpaw, can we talk?" Fernpaw asked.

The two padded outside, and Mosspaw watched from a distance as they glanced at Featherwing and Waterdrop, nodding their heads from time to time. They were obviously talking about them, oh, but if only Mosspaw knew what they were saying.

As soon as he began to walk their way, they headed over to Smokestar, and the three padded into the leader's den. Slowly, Mosspaw crept up against the den, trying to listen. The first part was muffled, but then Smokestar spoke.

"Now, Moonpaw and Fernpaw, it can't be that bad, can it? They didn't do it on purpose," Smokestar spoke.

Moonpaw spoke now. "Yeah, but, what if they did, Smokestar? Cats saw his dead body, and they all said they saw Featherwing and Waterdrop."

"You two are almost done being apprentices. Why do you need new mentors now? Look, I'll make an announcement to clear this all up, but I need to gather more information first before I decide if they truly killed him."

It was silent now, and Mosspaw tensed as he heard footsteps. He quickly ran off, watching Fernpaw and Moonpaw exit the den. Mosspaw had to talk to Smokestar! He knew that Waterdrop and Featherwing had not murdered the NightClan deputy!

As soon as Fernpaw and Moonpaw had cleared the area, Mosspaw padded into Smokestar's den. The tom was eating a mouse, sighing as he picked at it.

"Smokestar! Smokestar!" Mosspaw yowled.

Smokestar jumped, turning to see Mosspaw. "What is it? I told you that we aren't training today."

"Featherwing and Waterdrop didn't kill Stormfur!"

Smokestar tilted his head. "What?"

"I witnessed it. They didn't do it, Smokestar," Mosspaw said.

"How do you know? You don't have any proof!"

"Smokestar, I saw everything that took place in battle. I didn't get into many fights because I was watching the bush that Fernpaw was in, dodging cats from time to time. I saw you fighting with Cloudstar. You were yelling at him about your kithood. But I saw everything that had to do with Stormfur and Featherwing and Waterdrop."

"What happened then?" Smokestar asked.

"Stormfur was fighting lots of other cats before he fought Featherwing and Waterdrop. I saw the blood dripping off of him. He was already severely injured, but he wouldn't stop fighting, Smokestar. Then Featherwing and Waterdrop fought him, and he was even more injured. He hobbled off into the forest, then awhile late Silverstripe found him! They only fought him, Smokestar. He was a fool to keep fighting."

"Thank you, Mosspaw. I have my information now. I'll make an announcement this very moment."

Mosspaw followed Smokestar out of the leader's den into the camp. The sun had began to filter through the clouds now, providing some warmth among the cats.

"CATS OF SNOWCLAN!" Smokestar yowled as he climbed

up on top of the rock.

Cats began to gather beneath the rock, staring up at Smokestar as he waited until all the cats had gathered. "Featherwing, Waterdrop, will you please come up here?"

Mosspaw watched as the she-cats shook as they padded up the rock. Cats looked in horror, wondering what punishment Smokestar would give them.

"Now," Smokestar began. "I know a lot has been said about these she-cats and how they 'killed' Stormfur, the NightClan deputy. This is false! I've gotten a witness report that clearly explains why Stormfur died. Now, some cats have said that Stormfur was fighting well until Waterdrop and Featherwing attacked him and killed him, but this is not true. The witness has told me that they had seen Stormfur's wounds before he had even come near Waterdrop and Featherwing, and apparently, his wounds were severe, and he should not have been fighting. His wounds got worse when these two fought him, and he then wandered off where Silverstripe found his body later on. There will be no punishment for these two because they did not kill him! Technically, whoever fought Stormfur partially killed him, so these two are not to blame! Stormfur was a fool, and he should not have been fighting. You two will continue to mentor Moonpaw and Fernpaw," Smokestar spoke, facing his daughters.

A few cats cheered, though some did not believe Smokestar in any way. Obviously this would take awhile to clear up.

As the crowd cleared, Mosspaw managed to find Fernpaw. "Hey," he spoke.

"Hey," Fernpaw replied.

"Are you glad they didn't kill him?" Mosspaw asked.

"I guess so," Fernpaw replied. "It didn't seem like a reasonable story to me, but I'll be a warrior in a few sunrises, so it won't be too bad."

Mosspaw felt sorrow flood through him. It was only a few sunrises now? He had to spend these last few days with her constantly if she were to be a warrior in only a few days.

"Thanks for uh saving me back in the battle," Fernpaw spoke quietly.

"Oh, no problem," Mosspaw said.

"I guess it's nice to have a friend to watch out for you," Fernpaw said.

Suddenly, Mosspaw thought back to the journey with Snakekit and Ginger. He had friends who watched out for him, and they had died for him. He hoped that didn't happen to Fernpaw.

"Yeah," Mosspaw replied quietly.

"Well, I got to get some sleep," Fernpaw spoke. "Exam's in only a few sunrises. Got to do good, you know?"

"Yeah," Mosspaw replied, watching her walk away. What had happened to their friendship?

Chapter 12

As the sky began to turn indigo, the sky began to clear, stars shining brightly in the sky that lay above the camp. It was almost as if Skycloud and Mossclaw were with Mosspaw in SnowClan as he gazed at those stars. He wished they weren't dead.

Mosspaw stayed up late, being one of the last cats to head into the den. In fact, he was the last apprentice in the den, and he carefully stepped over the sleeping apprentices as he got to his nest in the back of the den.

It took Mosspaw awhile to fall asleep, but soon, his eyes got droopy, and he curled up slowly, falling into a deep sleep.

Mosspaw dreamt he was in a starlit meadow, and he gazed around, hearing the trickle of a running creek, listening to the wind fly through the trees. He was in StarClan, no doubt.

Mosspaw quietly walked around, wondering where all the other cats are. Usually there were other cats nearby. Why was he all alone in the glowing meadow?

Mosspaw sniffed the air, watching as a squirrel scurried by. Mosspaw crouched down, ready to catch the squirrel, when he heard a mew behind him.

The squirrel ran off, and when Mosspaw turned, he was face-to-face with a starry silver she-cat. He was gazing directly into the eyes of Skycloud.

"M-Mother?"

"Mosspaw, my you've grown a lot since you've come to SnowClan. Has it almost been a moon already since you arrived?" Skycloud asked, circling Mosspaw as she gazed at him.

"Almost," Mosspaw spoke. "In a few sunrises, it'll mark a

moon. I didn't think I grew that much."

Skycloud laughed. "Well, you obviously did, Mosspaw."

"Where's Mossclaw?"

Skycloud stopped laughing. "He will not be here to witness this event, Mosspaw. There is something I must talk to you about, something that Mossclaw will not witness, but he will hear of."

"What? Is it your kits?!" Mosspaw hissed. He stopped, realizing he was beginning to get angry at his mother.

"I was surprised it took you so long to figure that out, actually," Skycloud spoke. "But that is something that we do not need to discuss right now, Mosspaw. There are more important things to discuss."

"Like what?" Mosspaw asked.

"You've discovered some about your past, right?" Skycloud asked.

"I know about Petalnose, and how you raised her kits. I know about Smokestar and Cloudfur. I know about Cindertail and Ashclaw, and how they were Blacktail's kits. The only things I don't know are things that cats alive today would not know. I don't know much about you and Mossclaw, or about Blacktail. I don't really know about your parents and siblings. I don't know about how you raised Cindertail and Ashclaw."

"I see," Skycloud spoke.

"Will you tell me?" Mosspaw asked.

"Not now," Skycloud replied. "You will find out eventually. Now, Mosspaw, have you discovered the special thing you long for in SnowClan yet?"

"The what?"

Skycloud laughed. "That's what I thought. You obviously

have not found it. You see, Mosspaw, we are placed in certain clans or forests or places for reasons. Many don't usually find out why until they are about your age, Mosspaw. They find out what they'll do for the clan, why they will stay. But you have not found that yet."

"What do you mean?" Mosspaw asked.

"I suppose you won't find it until all of your past is revealed. Mosspaw, you can find something special if you keep looking. If you continue to search, you can learn more about your past, and someone you thought of as dead....might be alive."

"W-what?"

"Keep searching, Mosspaw. Keep searching," Skycloud spoke, slowly fading from Mosspaw.

"Wait?! How?! Where do I start?!"

Mosspaw's eyes suddenly shot open. What was Skycloud talking about? Keep searching? Did she mean leave the clan? That's all Mosspaw could think of.

And what did she mean by someone you thought of as dead might be alive? That could mean a million cats. Skycloud, Mossclaw, Petalnose, Ginger...Snakekit. Did she mean Snakekit?! Was Snakekit actually alive?!

Excitement and hope flooded through Mosspaw. What if Snakekit was? What if his first love was still alive?

And the past! Would his past be revealed to him if he continued his search. Oh, Mosspaw didn't know what to think. But he knew he had to leave! He had to find out if this was all true! He had to find the special thing that StarClan had spoken of.

But then he stopped, thinking of Smokestar, Fernpaw. Would they miss him? Oh, Mosspaw would only be out for a few sunrises or so. He would be back before they knew it. Mosspaw had to promise himself this.

Sighing, Mosspaw got up from his nest, crawling over the sleeping apprentices. He gazed at Fernpaw one last time. Their friendship really would end now... "Good-bye," he whispered.

He then padded out of the den, walking slowly past the warriors den and leader's den. "Good-bye, Smokestar," he whispered, padding out into the woods.

Mosspaw gazed around, knowing he had to head up northwest to fully get out of the forest. He had to be careful around FoxClan and NightClan territory. They would rip him to shreds if they found him.

But what would cover his scent? Obviously his clan mates would be able to trace him!

He looked, spotting some onion grass nearby. That would be perfect. Mosspaw laid down in the grass, beginning to roll around in it. Once he thought it covered up his scent good enough, he began to head out of the SnowClan territory into the FoxClan territory. If he kept on walking northwest, he wouldn't even step in the NightClan territory!

He slowly padded through, hoping no nighttime patrol would catch him at all. Mosspaw's pure white pelt did not help much either, and he slowly creeped through the woods. Maybe if he raced across trees?

No, Mosspaw really did hate trees. Ever since the fire and such that had killed his mother and Tooth, and the terrible journey he had made all night.

He was relieved as he successfully got out of the FoxClan territory with no cat hearing or noticing him. Thank StarClan it wasn't leaf-bare. If it had been snowing, sure, Mosspaw would be camouflaged, but he'd leave pawprints.

Now into free territory, he began to climb up the familiar hill that he had once climbed over only a moon before. No, he wasn't actually heading back towards the kittypet place, but instead, to the forest that they had been in before. That's where

Mosspaw would go.

Mosspaw turned, looking out into the forest from the hill. Was he really leaving? Yes, he had to. He had to find the special thing that Skycloud had told him about.

"I'll be back real soon, SnowClan. I promise," he spoke, fading into the forest ahead.

Chapter 13

During the first couple of days of his journey, Mosspaw was a bit apprehensive about the whole thing. Sure, he was excited to see if Snakekit, or another cat that died, was alive, but he wasn't sure if it was a right decision leaving the clan.

But now, it was his fourth sunrise away, and he was sure patrols had already gone out searching for him, though they would come back with nothing. Mosspaw just hoped they would not panic too much because he would return.

Mosspaw awoke to a sunny day, the heat of green-leaf spreading through the forest. Mosspaw remembered this forest well, for he had traveled in it before he had arrived. He had to be careful though, because he knew the farther he traveled, he would find other clans and twoleg places. The last thing Mosspaw wanted to be was another kittypet.

He yawned and padded out from under a rock he had been sleeping in. He stretched, then headed through the forest, looking for something to eat. As if StarClan had heard his prayers, a bird sat on the forest floor, trying to eat something off the ground.

Mosspaw slowly walked towards it, crouching down in an attempt to catch it. As it looked up, he knew he had been caught. But he leapt any way, just grabbing the tail of the bird. Now injured, the bird attempted to fly again, though Mosspaw killed it.

He ate the bird, glancing around to make sure no cat was nearby. Once he finished it, he buried it. If the SnowClan cats found him out here, they'd probably be able to figure out if prey was fresh or not.

He now padded through the forest, not entirely sure what he was looking for. A destination? No. He was looking for the past, for the cat that was still alive. He doubted it was Ginger, doubted even more it was Skycloud, could it have been Mossclaw? But he

had seen Mossclaw in StarClan, so it had to be Snakekit, right?

He wasn't sure if she was Snakepaw now, maybe even Gloria. He wasn't sure what name she went by now. That was, if she was the cat was alive.

He had received no signs from StarClan in four sunrises, and he really needed one. Sighing, he decided maybe if he took a nice nap, he could think of what to do or where to go. Back to SnowClan? That would seem stupid.

He could imagine it now, heading into the SnowClan camp to see cats relieved that they had found him, though when they questioned him, he would say, "Oh, well, StarClan told me to look for something, but they never contacted me again, so I came back."

No, he had to find whatever this was, then he would return home. Then he could apologize to Fernpaw, and Smokestar, and all the other cats.

Curling up, he basked in the sun, and fell asleep quickly.

Surprisingly, he woke up in StarClan which was his intent. He glanced around, already spotting Skycloud walking towards him.

"Mother!" he said, running towards her.

"Hi, Mosspaw," she purred.

"I was waiting for you to come to me! I'm not sure what I'm doing out here or what I'm looking for. Are you here to tell me?" Mosspaw asked.

"Not quite," Skycloud replied.

"Then why am I here?"

"You need to know more about your past, Mosspaw. You need to know things that no alive cat can tell you today. I am here to show you some of this."

"So I could've stayed in SnowClan all along? I didn't have to

come out here?!" Mosspaw complained.

"Hush. You need to be out here, and I'll tell you why in a second. I am going to show you a memory that has to do with my past. You'll see some of my past as the days go on. This is a memory when I was first born."

Mosspaw nodded as she touched her nose to his, and suddenly, it felt as if he were spinning. When he opened his eyes, he was in a nursery, though this one smelled different than the SnowClan one.

"Where am I?" he asked, though it seemed no cat could hear him.

He looked, seeing a gray and white she-cat lying on a nest, three kits suckling. A gray and white tom stood next to her, smiling. Were these cats Skycloud's parents?

The tom looked at the she-cat. "What shall we call them?" he asked.

The she-cat hesitated, looking down at the the kits. "We can call the white she-cat Petalkit. And the white tom, Cloudkit."

Mosspaw watched as the tom gazed down at the only non-white she-cat, a gray tabby she-cat who slept peacefully. His mother!

"Skykit," the tom said.

"I love that name," the she-cat purred.

Mosspaw watched as the two held gaze for awhile, then the tom's face turned into a frown, and he watched as Skycloud's mother frowned too. "What's wrong?" she asked.

The tom sighed. "Not too long ago, a large group of cats threatened war on ForestClan. I was leading the patrol when it happened. Birchstar agreed to war, and I-they looked so tough. Rosefur, I don't want our kits endangered."

Rosefur. That was Skycloud's mother. Mosspaw couldn't help but think of Rose, the annoying white she-cat at the twoleg place who had actually been his mother. It was still confusing to him.

Rosefur stared at the tom. "What do you mean?"

The tom looked down at his paws. "ForestClan isn't safe anymore!" he mewed quickly. "Please, take the kits away from here! Raise them in another clan! So many deaths of cats this moon worries me. I don't want one of our kits dying."

"I'll be fine!" Rosefur complained. "I'm not helpless!" She then looked down at her kits.

"Please, Rosefur," the tom begged. "For the kits. You can come back in three moons. Nothing will change."

"Fine," she grumbled. "Are you coming?"

The tom shook his head. "No, the journey is for you to make. But meet me back here in three moons, unless I find you."

Mosspaw watched as Rosefur nodded, then everything began to fade out, and Mosspaw stared at Skycloud in shock.

"You-you were born in ForestClan? I don't believe it!" Mosspaw spoke.

"SnowClan had just begun when we left. Yes, you are of ForestClan descent, Mosspaw, but you've developed SnowClan characteristics, just like my siblings and I did. Now, this is only the beginning of memories. I'm not showing you everything, just some things from my past."

"What about Mossclaw's?"

"If he wishes to show you his past, he will."

"Will everything with Blacktail be explained?" Mosspaw asked.

Skycloud hesitated. "Yes, yes it will. And Cindertail and Ashclaw. Now, you need to continue this journey for a reason."

"Why?" Mosspaw asked. "What am I searching for? I know I have to find the cat who I thought was dead, but where do I look? What is the special thing I'm searching for?"

Skycloud stared at Mosspaw, her eyes gazing down at him. "Head into the woods where you, Snakekit, and Ginger once were. Head to the place where you went to bathe, but in return, you found two cats, one in StarClan, one alive. If you have not found the special thing by then, it will show you."

Mosspaw was confused. What was Skycloud even talking about?

"Along the way, you will meet the cat you once thought was dead. Now go!" she commanded.

Mosspaw woke up quickly, shuddering. What had Skycloud meant by the place he had found two cats, one in StarClan, and one alive? Suddenly, Mosspaw remembered the pool. What had Ginger called it? It had something to do with StarClan, that's all he remembered. Then Mosspaw remembered he had seen a cat from StarClan. Who had it been, though? And who was the cat that he had seen.

Mosspaw suddenly stopped. Skycloud wanted him to find Moonpool.

Mosspaw will learn more about his past in the next few chapters, but don't worry, it's not like you're reading Mosskit Book 1 all over again. It'll be more vague, and it is just a journey in which Mosspaw comprehends his past. Also, don't worry, this journey is only taking up about eight chapters, so it's not like it's Mosskit Book 2 all over again haha.

Chapter 14

Another few days had passed since Skycloud had come to Mosspaw and explained her birth to him, but Mosspaw still remained confused. StarClan had not visited him since, and Mosspaw sighed, thinking if his decision to journey was truly right.

He had been heading towards Moonpool for the past few days, though often times he got lost, not knowing the way too well. Some things were familiar, but he couldn't find the pool he had attempted to bathe in.

Sighing, he walked through the forest, thinking of how he and Snakekit played in this forest along their journey, talking about what they would do in SnowClan.

Mosspaw sighed as a tear slid down his cheek. He never really got to mourn about Snakekit back in SnowClan, but now he could. Now he could let it all out.

Sighing, he layed down, tears streaming onto his white paws that were covered in dirt and grass from his journey.

"Oh, Snakekit," he cried out. "Why did you leave?"

If this were one of those kit tales, Snakekit would be back by now, and they could be together in SnowClan, training. But no, Snakekit was dead.

Mosspaw forced himself to get up. He needed to find Moonpool. Maybe Snakekit would be there. Maybe.

He walked again through the forest, catching a squirrel which he ate quickly. He was hoping to be back in a few sunrises, but he doubt that would happen. He would be out here for moons!

Getting a drink of water, Mosspaw decided to lay back down in the sun for a nap. Maybe StarClan could come to him then.

Laying in the golden grass, Mosspaw curled up, slowly closing his eyes as the sun warmed his back. He quickly fell into a deep sleep.

His paws tingled as he awoke in the familiar StarClan. He gazed around for Skycloud once again, wondering what she would show him today. She had said she would show him sequences from the past in the upcoming days, so today had to be a day!

"Skycloud!" he called out.

The silver she-cat appeared only moments later, smiling at her son. "Welcome back, Mosspaw."

"Why did you wait a few days?"

"To test your patience," she purred.

"You sound just like Smokestar," Mosspaw complained.

"Now, sit beside me, Mosspaw," Skycloud instructed.

Mosspaw nodded, sitting down beside his mother. He expected to feel her warm fur against him, but he barely felt anything, not even much warmness. Was she even real?

"Now, I'm going to show you sequences from my early kithood when I was going on a journey to SnowClan."

"Just like me," Mosspaw smiled.

"Almost," Skycloud smiled. "At least you were guided. My mother found it all by herself. Now touch your nose to mine."

"Why do you never just tell me the story?" Mosspaw asked.

Skycloud smiled warmly. "What's the fun of that?"

Mosspaw smiled, touching his nose to hers. A familiar bright light shone, and when he opened his eyes, he was standing in a forest, watching Rosefur, Cloudkit, Petalkit, and his mother head through the forest.

Petalkit and Cloudkit seemed to play around with each other while Skykit slowly gazed around behind them, staring at her paws as she walked. Rosefur turned her head often, sniffing the air occasionally. She was looking for something, Mosspaw knew it.

"We journeyed for three moons," Mosspaw heard Skycloud's voice boom. Where was her voice coming from?

Suddenly, the sequence changed. This time it showed Skykit near a clan, Rosefur, Cloudkit, and Petalkit, already padding away.

"Wait, Skykit!" Mosspaw heard a familiar voice call.

A short ginger tom padded towards the she-cat, a saddened expression on his face. "Where are you going?" he whimpered.

"I'm leaving," Skykit solemnly replied.

"What? Why?"

"We were never meant to stay here. We're just finding a temporary home right now. I'll be heading back to my real clan soon." Mosspaw could tell by his mother's expression that she was lying. She obviously did not believe the words she spoke.

"Where is your real home?" the ginger kit asked.

"I don't know," Skykit replied, padding away from the tom.

Mosspaw watched as the tears gathered in the tom's eyes, and he too felt saddened as Skykit left the scene, catching up with her family. Even as a young kit, she sounded wise.

Scenes flashed by quickly now, showing glimpses of the traveling family. Mosspaw watched as Skykit and her siblings grew along the trip, and finally, the scenes stopped, and another came into view.

This showed a completely different forest, and Mosspaw watched as Rosefur and the kits padded by. He could tell by Rosefur's confident steps that she had found SnowClan. She had found whatever she was looking for.

The cats padded into a small camp, only a few cats padding around. A pure white she-cat with glossy blue eyes padded quickly towards Rosefur.

Mosspaw watched as Rosefur and the she-cat quickly exchanged glances. Their eyes widened, and it was as if they had seen a Dark Forest cat.

Once Rosefur could catch her words, she spoke, "Hello. I apologize, but we've traveled far, and I was wondering if we may stay at your camp for awhile."

"Oh, of course," the she-cat spoke, her shock fading. "We never turn down new warriors. Our clan is just beginning. I'm Icestar. Pleasure to meet you."

Icestar. The first SnowClan leader. Mosspaw had heard the stories from Ginger about her. The she-cat looked much younger than Mosspaw had imagined. She was obviously just beginning her leadership.

Mosspaw looked around, not recognizing the SnowClan camp at all. Then he remembered about the cave they had stayed at, and the thoughts flooded back. MoonClan had made them move. This was their original camp and territory.

As they headed into the den, Mosspaw could tell the flashback would end soon. He turned, spotting a familiar black tom with bright green eyes. Blacktail! Here he looked much younger than the StarClan cat Mosspaw had met. He looked like a mere apprentice.

Suddenly, everything faded, and Mosspaw opened his eyes, sitting next to Skycloud again.

"I-I'm so confused. What was Rosefur looking for? Who was the kit you met?"

Skycloud purred. "I knew you'd have questions. The kit I met had to be my first crush," she laughed. "His name was Lionkit. We stayed at a camp for a few days, and we instantly became best

friends. I had to leave though, so it was a lost cause." She paused, her smile fading.

"Rosefur was looking for her mother," Skycloud began. "Can you guess who it was?"

Mosspaw thought back to the way Icestar and Rosefur were shocked at seeing each other. But, that didn't make sense. Leaders couldn't have mates or kits. "Icestar?"

Skycloud nodded. "Icestar is Rosefur's mother. You're related to her too."

Mosspaw felt excitement flood through him. "I'm related to the first SnowClan leader!"

Skycloud laughed. "And Smokestar too. And the deputy."

Mosspaw's laughter faded quickly though. "But, leaders can't have mates or kits."

Skycloud smiled. "Icestar knew this too. She came from an ancient clan, IceClan. Her clan was failing though, and she and her mate were the only survivors. She gave birth to Rosefur, Jetpelt, and Pebblefoot. But she decided leadership was better. Her mate killed himself, and she escorted her three kits to ForestClan where they grew up. She then started a clan, not expecting any of her kits to find her. Oh, but they did."

"Jetpelt and Pebblefoot too?"

"No, not exactly," Skycloud purred. "Blacktail, he was Jetpelt's kit. He didn't know they were related at the time. After Jetpelt died from greencough, he came to SnowClan. And Stonepaw, Pebblefoot's son, he was left in SnowClan."

"Stonepaw? I've never heard of him."

"He died when he was an apprentice. Now, Mosspaw, I must leave, but I'll be back soon. Keep heading to Moonpool."

"But I forgot the way," Mosspaw complained.

"You'll know the way," Skycloud smiled. "Trust me."

With those words, she faded, and Mosspaw awoke in the sunlit meadow, though now it was sunset.

Mosspaw could not believe how much he was learning about his past, but when would he learn about Blacktail and Mossclaw? What if he never learned about them at all?

Sighing, he padded farther into the woods to find a place to rest. The sun slowly set, and Mosspaw slept under a nearby rock. Maybe he would get another vision from StarClan, though he doubted it. Yawning, he closed his eyes, falling asleep once again.

Chapter 15

Over a moon had passed, and Mosspaw had grown much. He no longer felt like the small apprentice in his clan.

Skycloud had continued to show Mosspaw memories. He'd learned about her apprentice and kit days, he'd learned about Smokestar and his siblings, and how they were Rosefur's second litter. He had learned about Skycloud's warrior days as well.

Mosspaw sighed, padding around the forest. He had been looking for Moonpool, though he kept either going past it or on another route. It seemed as if he would never find the pool that would lead him to the cat and what he was really searching for.

Mosspaw had expected to be back at SnowClan by now, but he still wandered in the forest, learning more about the past as the hours dragged on.

At times, Mosspaw was homesick, wanting to return to SnowClan. He missed everyone terribly, especially Fernpaw, but he knew this mission was important, and he had to go through with it.

Wind blew in Mosspaw's pelt as he padded through the forest. The sun had just begun to set, and Mosspaw was hoping for more memories tonight.

Hungry, he searched around for something to eat. Maybe a squirrel or rabbit would fill his stomach, and he headed farther into the woods, searching for something to eat.

The sound of a twig snapping caught his attention, and he turned, spotting a mouse eating away at a berry.

Slowly, he approached it, crouching down towards the mouse. All at once, the mouse looked up, noticing Mosspaw. Mosspaw then leapt, barely catching the mouse.

He ate it quickly then headed around the forest, looking for a place to sleep for the night.

His stomach still grumbled, but he ignored it. He knew shelter was far more important, and he found an empty burrow, probably dug by a fox.

He climbed in slowly. No fox laid inside, and the scent was stale. This fox would obviously not be returning soon.

Yawning, Mosspaw curled up in the burrow, resting his chin on the ground. He shut his eyes, his breaths becoming more steady now, and he fell asleep.

Mosspaw dreamt he was back in StarClan with Skycloud, and at the sight of his mother, he ran to her, a large grin upon his face. He wondered what he would learn today! His mother had still not mentioned anything with Blacktail or Mossclaw, and he hoped he would learn about them tonight.

"Hello, Mosspaw," his mother purred.

"What will I be learning today?" Mosspaw asked, sitting down in front of his mother.

"Do you have any questions to ask me first?" Skycloud asked, sitting down by Mosspaw. "How is your journey?"

"Well, have I passed the Moonpool? I've been searching for nearly two moons, and I still can't find it," Mosspaw complained.

Skycloud laughed. "It is closer than you think, and no, you have not passed it. You'll reach it in a day or two."

"How will I know where it is when I get there?"

"You'll just know," Skycloud replied.

Mosspaw smiled, and he gazed up at his mother. Her eyes sparkled, and Mosspaw almost saw himself in his mother.

"We will be learning about Blacktail tonight," Skycloud

replied.

Mosspaw wanted to cheer, though he decided to not show any signs of happiness. He had a feeling Blacktail was not a particularly happy memory, and he slowly nodded.

"Cindertail and Ashclaw will not be mentioned in these memories because they happen to go better with another cat."

Mosspaw knew exactly who Skycloud was talking about. Mossclaw, his father.

"Are you ready?" Skycloud asked.

Mosspaw nodded. "Yes, I am."

With those words, he touched his nose to Skycloud's, and everything faded.

Mosspaw sat in the nursery of the old SnowClan camp, watching Petalkit and Cloudkit tumble around while his mother sat up against the den, watching the two.

A sudden voice came from outside the nursery, and Mosspaw watched as a young black tom with bright green eyes padded into the den. Blacktail.

"Hello Petalkit, Cloudkit, and Skykit," he spoke, a young brown tabby she-cat following after him. "This is Thornpaw," Blacktail, or rather Blackpaw, said, introducing the young she-cat. "She wanted to meet you three."

Cloudkit and Petalkit gave a cheerful 'hi' while Skykit slowly whispered a greeting.

Mosspaw watched as Cloudkit and Petalkit began to play with Blackpaw and Thornpaw, though he noticed his mother still sat on the side of the den, not taking part in any of the games.

After awhile, Thornpaw padded over to the young Skycloud. "Why don't you play with your siblings, Skykit?" she asked.

Skykit shrugged. "I just don't feel like it, I guess. I'd just rather watch."

Mosspaw turned, seeing Thornpaw's odd expression at this reply. "Suit yourself," Thornpaw said as she turned away.

The scene changed now, showing a few sequences of Skykit staring longingly at Blackpaw often, and the scene changed again.

A sudden yowl frightened Mosspaw as Icestar rushed into the den. "The river is flooding! Everyone out now!" she screeched.

Mosspaw watched as Rosefur grabbed Skykit by the scruff and allowed Cloudkit and Petalkit to climb onto her back. The mother and her three kits successfully made it up a tree, resting on the branches.

Mosspaw turned, suddenly seeing Thornpaw and Blackpaw scrambling to get onto a slippery rock. Thornpaw made it up slightly, then slipped, plunging into the water. Blackpaw dived into the water to rescue her, and when he came back up, he placed the unconscious Thornpaw on a rock.

Blackpaw tried to crawl onto the rock now, but the water pushed him away, and Mosspaw's heart nearly broke when he heard his mother's horrific screech. "BLACKPAW!" she yowled.

More sequences came, showing days pass by as Skykit mourned and wept, even becoming an apprentice, though Mosspaw did not believe her apprentice ceremony did not make her feel any better about losing her friend.

The scene changed, showing a cold leaf-fall day where Icestar returned with Blackpaw and Thornpaw during sunset.

"Blackpaw!" Skypaw screeched, running to the black tom.

"Wow, I didn't know you'd be so excited," he laughed.

Mosspaw watched as Skypaw frowned. "I-We missed you a lot," she said.

Blackpaw gave a smile then padded past her with Thornpaw. He assumed Thornpaw and Blackpaw had an interest for each other, and he frowned as he noticed Skypaw's expression. It seemed she had just realized their interest too.

"Oh no," Mosspaw whispered.

The sequences continued, showing Blackpaw become a warrior with Thornpaw and another cat. It showed Blacktail eventually becoming mates with the now-named Thorndapple, and Mosspaw felt a pang of sorrow for his mother.

As the sequences continued, the next one showed a white she-cat carrying the injured Blacktail into the cave the cats were taking refuge in on their journey to a new forest.

"BLACKTAIL IS INJURED!" the she-cat screeched.

Mosspaw watched as the medicine cat began to fix him up, and he sighed as Skypaw waited by the black tom until he woke up. When he did, he muttered not Skypaw's name, but Thorndapple's, and Mosspaw groaned at Skypaw's sorrowful expression.

Once Skypaw asked him the story, he explained Thorndapple had met another cat, and he had become jealous, yelling at her. Thorndapple was supposed to tell something to him, but she had padded off with the other tom before Blacktail had a chance to hear. He then explained he thought she was expecting his kits.

Skypaw's eyes widened, and Mosspaw could literally feel her heart breaking into pieces. Mosspaw knew Skypaw would've never treated him this way.

"I'll find her," Skypaw spoke.

Blacktail argued against her, but Skypaw would not back down. She headed out into the cave, trying to figure out Thorndapple's scent. Cloudpaw arrived behind her, and the brother and sister headed out, looking for the two together.

Thorndapple sat with a gray tom, and Skypaw could tell

Thorndapple and the other cat were falling in love, just like Blacktail had said.

Thorndapple did not want to hear about the tom, but Skypaw spoke to Thorndapple with anger and rage, explaining how much Blacktail loved Thorndapple, and how Thorndapple was acting selfish.

Hearing this, the gray tom gave Thorndapple's permission to go off, and Mosspaw watched as the scene changed, this time showing Thorndapple and Blacktail together in the cave.

"I'm sorry," Thorndapple spoke.

After an apology, Thorndapple then said to Blacktail, "I'm expecting your kits."

Mosspaw's eyes widened, and more sequences followed, showing Thorndapple's stomach growing, his mother growing older as an apprentice, Thorndapple's only kit, a daughter, Skycloud growing more and turning into a warrior, and several images of Skycloud's early life as a warrior staring dreamily at Blacktail, knowing he'll never love her back.

This scene changed now, showing Thorndapple and several other cats heading into camp.

"Where are you going?!" Blacktail spat at the she-cat.

"I can't tell you," Thorndapple replied.

"I'm your mate, and you can't even tell me where you're going?"

Thorndapple shook her head, padding off with the other cats and leaving her mate and daughter behind.

Mosspaw realized how often the two had been fighting in the sequences, and he knew that maybe this was Skycloud's chance.

Blacktail turned to Skycloud. "I can't believe she did that," he spoke.

"I know this is sudden," Skycloud spoke.

She's going to tell him the truth, Mosspaw realized.

"But I like you, Blacktail. And I've wanted to be mates for awhile now."

Blacktail's eyes widened, and he gave the same response. "Really?! I was thinking the same thing."

Mosspaw watched as his mother and other tom nuzzled affectionately. It was just like Skycloud had wanted, but Mosspaw knew this would not last forever. After all, Blacktail wasn't his father, Mossclaw was.

Scenes passed, and as Skycloud walked nervously with Blacktail in the forest, Mosspaw noticed her stomach had grown some, and he realized she was going to tell him that she was expecting his kits.

A sudden sound of badger broke up their conversation, and Mosspaw watched as his mother took a step back, loosing her footing and grabbing onto the edge of the cliff, her feet dangling.

"BLACKTAIL! HELP!"

Blacktail ran over, and the badger swiped at him. He too lost his footing, though he fell over the cliff, not holding on. Skycloud let go to save him, and Mosspaw watched them down at the bottom now, scratched up some, but not much.

A large crash came, and something came tumbling down the waterfall. Skycloud and Blacktail made their way over to the shallow water, finding the injured Thorndapple.

"Thorndapple?" Blacktail asked.

"Blacktail, it's you. I've been trying to find you," she weakly spoke.

Mosspaw watched as Thorndapple explained how she had seen Skycloud and Blacktail and how she thought he had died going

over the cliff. He learned more on how she had jumped off the waterfall to die with him, only to realize he had not died.

"I still love you," she said, gazing at Blacktail.

"You do?" Blacktail asked. He then asked her why she had jumped off the waterfall, and she replied that she had been unhappy with her life. She then spoke that she knew she would die, and before either could speak again, a yowl came from Lilypaw, Blacktail and Thorndapple's daughter.

"NO!" Lilypaw shrieked, running through the water to her mother.A

Skycloud turned to Thorndapple. "I'm sorry, Thorndapple. We became mates after you left and—"

"It's alright," Thorndapple spoke, taking in her last breath.

A shriek came from Lilypaw as she gazed at her dead mother. Lilypaw then turned to Blacktail. "Why? Why did she die?! Why did you let this happen, Daddy?! You're a terrible father!"

Mosspaw gasped and realized how hurt Blacktail had become at these words. He watched as Blacktail turned to Skycloud, apologizing as he ran away.

Suddenly, Mosspaw realized what he was going to do, and his mother did to. A shriek came from his mother as he leapt down the waterfall, landing in the water beside Thorndapple.

"Blacktail," Skycloud began, running to the dying tom. The tom did not look at her though, but his daughter.

"I didn't want you to do that, Daddy," Lilypaw spoke.

The tom then took in his last breath and died. "Our kits," Skycloud whispered.

"YOU! YOU CAUSED THIS!" Lilypaw yowled at Skycloud, running away. Skycloud did not move a muscle though. Instead, she stared at the two dead mates together.

"It was never meant to be," Mosspaw heard Skycloud's own voice now, and everything faded, returning to StarClan.

"He-he died?!" Mosspaw gasped.

Skycloud nodded. "When I gazed at Thorndapple and Blacktail dead beside each other, that's when I knew. That's when I knew that it wasn't meant to be, and that they had belonged to each other all along."

"But your kits."

"We will see that memory later, but now you know. Now you know how much pain and suffering I went through my whole life, wanting a tom I could never have. I never got him even when he was mine."

"I'm so sorry," Mosspaw spoke.

"Don't be, Mosspaw. We still have not learned about your father, and that is a different story to come. I'll see you soon. Continue walking. You'll come to Moonpool soon."

Mosspaw nodded as Skycloud and StarClan faded, and he woke up in the night. He gazed into the stars, realizing how much his mother had gone through. Had the same been with Mossclaw too? Mosspaw hoped not.

Chapter 16

Mosspaw knew he had almost reached his destination. He had listened to his mother's words, and he could tell Moonpool was really only a few day's walk away.

Soon enough, he would learn what he had been searching for, he would meet the cat he had thought died long ago, and he would know everything about his past. In only a few more days, his life would be complete.

This evening, he braced himself for another night of memories. Maybe today he would learn about his father! Maybe he would learn about Cindertail and Ashclaw. The possibilities were endless.

Mosspaw only had a small and thin tree for shelter tonight. The tree was thin and weak, it's branches looking like they would easily snap in the wind. Small leaves sprouted from the branches, and Mosspaw was afraid the tree would crack and break at the touch of its trunk.

Mosspaw slowly curled up beside it, though wind still ruffled his pelt, and a small leaf drifted down and landed on his nose. It seemed that it would be a windy night.

Before he could even close his eyes, however, a crack of thunder came from above. Raindrops began to drift down, and Mosspaw realized he was in the middle of a green-leaf thunderstorm. He had never been in one before, and he slowly sat up against the tree that blowed viciously in the wind. How would he ever get to sleep?

Knowing he couldn't sleep against the tree, he made his way through the thick storm, wind and rain blowing against his pelt with each step he took. He looked around, hoping to get out of the meadow that he has spent the day in, but he saw no signs of forest life anywhere.

Mosspaw ran now, attempting to head back to the forest, though the pouring rain kept getting into his eyes, not allowing his vision

to work well.

He ran quicker now, leaves blowing up beside him. It was almost as if this storm were a late new-leaf storm that had forgotten to pour on the forest.

Quicker now, he managed to find a pile of rocks that he sheltered under. He quickly crawled under one, his pelt wet with rain. He shook it off then curled up under the rock. The thunder cracked above, and wind howled loudly. But Mosspaw was safe from the storm. It was all safe now.

He closed his eyes, ignoring the howling wind and rain, and he slowly fell asleep under he small rock.

He wasn't surprised to wake up in the glittering forests of StarClan once again. This time, Skycloud sat by a nearby tree, smiling at her son. "Welcome, Mosspaw," she spoke gently.

Mosspaw smiled, padding towards his mother who seemed to glisten in the forest. Mosspaw sat down in front of her, his tail curled around his feet.

"Quite a storm going on," Mosspaw spoke.

Skycloud laughed. "Just another green-leaf storm. Nothing much that we StarClan cats can do."

"So, what will I be learning today?" he asked, his paws tingling with excitement. He hoped in his heart it would be Mossclaw or Ashclaw and Cindertail.

"Petalnose," Skycloud slowly spoke.

Mosspaw's heart sunk. He had been hoping to hear about his father, but now he would only be hearing about his aunt. Though he was disappointed for a few moments, he realized he had not learned too much of her, and he began to grow curious.

"My sister," Skycloud spoke, "was my best friend. We did everything together, and and we were incredibly close. The day she died, my heart literally broke into pieces. Now, you must learn the

relationship between me and her. Perhaps it will inspire you to have the same relationship with time siblings."

I doubt it, Mosspaw thought, but he kept his mouth shut as Skycloud slowly touched her glowing nose to his.

Mosspaw sat in the SnowClan nursery this time where Petalkit and Skykit played, laughter filling the air. Cloudkit sat with a ginger she-cat whom Mosspaw did not recognize.

Mosspaw couldn't help but smile at the two sisters playing, and it made Mosspaw wish he had siblings. He stopped, knowing he did have siblings, knowing that he had blocked them out from his life, the, blocking him out of theirs. Skycloud was right, he needed to make amends.

The scene changed now, showing sequences of Skykit and Petalkit playing, showing receive their apprentice name. They were shown training together, learning the ways of becoming a warrior. Mosspaw had not realized how close they were.

As they neared the age of a warrior, some more sequences were shown showing Skypaw waking up to find Petalpaw's nest empty. More were shown of the sleepy Petalpaw's during patrols, and soon the sequences slowed, this time showing Skypaw and Petalpaw's waking up in the morning.

"Petalpaw, Petalpaw, wake up!" Skypaw said, poking her sister.

Petalpaw opened her eyes and yawned.

"Petalpaw, you're never late. Are you feeling well?"

"I didn't get a lot of sleep last night," Petalpaw spoke, suppressing another large yawn.

"How come?"

Petalpaw shrugged and padded out the den, and Mosspaw could tell his mother was suspicious. The scene changed now, showing the two padding on patrol. Skypaw walked in the front with Icestar while Petalpaw slowly padded behind.

"Petalpaw, keep up!" Icestar yowled.

"I'll wait behind with her," Skypaw said, padding to the back of the patrol to be with her sister.

Mosspaw watched as Skypaw waited until the rest of the patrol was far away before talking. "I'm not stupid, Petalpaw. You weren't in your nest last night. Where were you?" Skypaw whispered.

"I guess I can't lie to you," Petalpaw whispered. "I was meeting a handsome tom."

The conversation continued as Petalpaw explained it was a rogue whose name was Rockclaw. She had explained how he had escaped from ForestClan and how they had fallen in love. Skypaw began to argue with her sister, but promised not to tell.

The scenes continued showing Petalpaw's eyes continuing to droop, her nests still being empty at night, and it showed Skypaw's worries for her sisters.

As they received their warrior names, the scenes stopped as it showed Petalnose and Skycloud near the edge of the camp.

"Uh, Skycloud," Petalnose said. "Can I talk to you for a second?"

The two walked into some bushes behind the warriors' den, and Skycloud spoke. "Petalnose what's hap-"

"I'm sorry! Everything is going wrong for me! It's all my fault! I've brought shame to the clan!" Petalnose wailed.

"Petalnose, I don't even know what you're talking about. You're loyal to the clan. Now tell me what happened," Skycloud said, pausing. "It's about Rockclaw, isn't it?"

"I'm expecting his kits."

Skycloud's jaw hung open in disbelief, and the scene changed as Petalnose spoke to Icestar who did not exile her. It showed Petalnose's stomach beginning to grow with kits, and the lovely apprentice Longpaw beginning to visit her, at one point proclaiming

his love for her.

Mosspaw watched as Petalnose's kit was eventually born. A white and gray she-cat who looked similar to Rosefur. Her name was Mintkit.

Mosspaw watched as Mintkit began to grow and play. He watched as the young kit grew confused at her mother's tears each night. But he also watched her tears subside as Longpaw came to her aid.

As Mintkit grew older, not yet the apprentice age, the scene showed Petalnose in the medicine cat den, gasping loudly. It had been revealed that she was expecting Longpaw's kits. Mosspaw watched now as Skycloud congratulated Petalnose, though Mosspaw knew she had no idea how she would take care of Mintkit and her second litter.

Mintkit grew more, and Longpaw received the warrior name of Longtail. Petalnose's stomach grew again, and as Mintkit became Mintpaw, the she-cat cried out in pain and ran to the medicine cat to give birth to Longtail's kits.

Mosspaw watched as his mother watched her sister from the side as she gave birth to four kits. There was a ginger tom, Blazekit, a gray tabby, Riverkit, a white tom, Cottonkit, and a small gray and white she-cat named Ivykit.

As they began to talk, Mosspaw watched as Petalnose screeched as she heard the news that Ivygaze was mute. He smiled as he heard his mother's comforting words, and the scene changed.

Mosspaw braced himself, for he knew which scene would be next...Petalnose's death.

Mosspaw looked out onto the familiar SnowClan camp. Mosspaw watched as Thorndapple raced into camp with the bloody Petalnose on her back. Thorndapple's eyes were wild, and her paws were bloodstained.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!" Skycloud gasped. "LET HER GO!"

Thorndapple ignored this comment, slamming Petalnose into a tree.

"Now she'll die for sure!"

"NO!" Skycloud hissed, beginning to claw at Thorndapple, only to be pulled back by Blacktail, her mate at the time.

Skycloud quickly ran to her dying sister, tears streaming down her face. "Petalnose," she began.

"Longtail? Where's Longtail?" she whispered.

"He's not here," Skycloud slowly whispered.

"Skycloud, take care of them. Take care of my kits. I don't want to leave them. Tell Longtail I love him," she breathed heavily, her eyes closing. She gave one last breath then died.

"NO!" Skycloud screeched, sobbing into her dead sister's body. Longtail ran in, a look of shock on is face.

"PETALNOSE!" he shouted in pain. Mintpaw came over, and Petalnose's four kits did too, beginning to cry into their mother's fur.

Mosspaw did not realize that tears were streaming down his face too as he saw all of Petalnose's family members cry and mourn for her.

"Come kits, I'll take care of you now," Skycloud said, motioning them over to the center of th camp as Petalnose was buried.

The kits cried into Petalnose's fur, as did Longtail, Mintpaw, Cloudfur, and Smokepaw. Skycloud hushed them though and whispered. "She'll always be in StarClan. She'll never be fad away."

As the kits fell asleep, Blacktail sat down beside Skycloud and sighed. "I don't know how you do this, Skycloud."

"Do what?"

"You've had so many family members die. One of your closest ones died today, and now you're raising her four kits and Mintpaw. You're very brave."

"Thank you..."

Everything faded, and Mosspaw opened his eyes to see his mother with tears in her eyes. "I'll never forget that day," she whispered.

"I'm confused," Mosspaw admitted. "Why was Thorndapple like that? Why did Petalnose die? How?"

Skycloud paused. "Thorndapple was possessed by her father, Scourge, and so all of her family was forced to move over to BloodClan until it passed, including Longtail. Petalnose was heartbroken because she thought he was leaving her, just like Rockclaw had done. Petalnose went after him to BloodClan, and apparently she had been thrown in a badger set where she had been badly injured. Thorndapple ran her over to SnowClan where she killed Petalnose."

"That's terrible," Mosspaw admitted. "Will I get to meet her?"

"Soon," Skycloud smiled. "You'll meet all of them soon."

With those words, everything faded, and Mosspaw woke up to the early morning light.

Chapter 17

Mosspaw knew Moonpool was nearby. He knew it no longer a day's walk, but a few hours walk. He could feel it inside him, and he knew he would make it there by the end of the day.

As Mosspaw padded around the forest, he saw the leaves falling off the branches of the tree. Together they swirled in the wind, flying past the tip of Mosspaw's nose.

Leaf-fall had arrived. Mosspaw was certain. He knew by the way the nights had begun cooler. He knew by the way the leaves fell.

Though leaf-fall was now spread through the forest, a warm sun still beat down on Mosspaw's back as he padded though the forest.

His morning journey had been prosperous, and he had walked a great distance. He knew he would reach Moonpool by evening, so he decided to find a tree with some shade to nap.

He gazed around then spotted a glorious tree that provided a large amount of shade. Smiling, he padded down to the tree where he layed down.

Mosspaw knew the memories would end soon. He knew his journey would end soon. He had learned practically everything, and he knew soon Skycloud would leave him, he'd find the thing he was searching for, he'd meet the cat, and then he'd go home.

These thoughts ran through Mosspaw's head as he slowly closed his eyes. With the wind blowing on his back, he slowly fell asleep.

It was no surprise to him that he was back in StarClan. He heard the rushing of a water, and he noticed Skycloud sitting by the flowing river, catching a fish.

"Mother!" he called.

She turned her head and smiled. "Mosspaw," she grinned. Leaving

the fish she had caught, she padded towards her son, a wide smile on her face.

"What will I learn today?" Mosspaw asked.

Skycloud smiled at his enthusiasm. "Now, Mosspaw, before we discuss, I must tell you, this will be your last meeting in StarClan. This will be your last memory."

Mosspaw felt his heart sank. He knew the day would soon approach, though he did not know it would approach so quickly. "I'm ready, and I would like to thank you for the opportunity. Will I ever see you again?"

"Knowing you, you probably will," Skycloud purred. "I'm pretty sure you can tell what you'll be learning about today."

"My father," Mosspaw said, letting out a slow nod.

Skycloud nodded. "That is right. You'll learn about your father and your siblings. Are you ready, Mosspaw?"

Mosspaw nodded. "I'm ready to learn, Mother," he said, touching his nose to hers.

A flash came, and Mosspaw opened his eyes to see himself in the SnowClan nursery. Skycloud sat in the nursery with Petalnose's four kits around her. Her stomach was growing, and it was now obvious she was pregnant with Blacktail's kits.

As she sat, Mintpaw suddenly raced in. "Did you hear? Did you hear?"

"What?" Skycloud asked.

"A new tom has just arrived! He's going to join our clan! His name is Mossclaw! Isn't it exciting?!"

Mosspaw watched as his mother stepped outside to get a glimpse of her future mate. His mother turned away shortly, and time passed until Icestar introduced the two.

"And this is Skycloud," Icestar spoke. "Her sister died recently, so she's been raising her kits. Skycloud is expecting kits of her own."

"Hi, welcome to SnowClan," Skycloud said, rising.

"Hi. That's very kind of you to raise your sister's kits like that," Mossclaw said.

He watched as the scene changed, this time showing Skycloud's refusal to go hunting with the tom. It continued to change, showing Mintpaw reveal to Skycloud that Mossclaw liked her and how Skycloud had angrily replied she would not let go of Blacktail too easily.

Skycloud continued to deny his hunting requests, and Mosspaw watched as Skycloud's stomach continued to grow. As Mossclaw asked again, Mosspaw expected the usual no, but she surprisingly agreed.

Mosspaw watched as Skycloud briefly told Mossclaw some of her story and how annoyed she looked as Mossclaw told some of his. As Skycloud padded over to catch a squirrel, she fell through thin ice, screaming for help.

Mosspaw watched as Mossclaw leapt in to save the she-cat. He pulled her out and dragged her back to the shore. "Are you alright?" he asked.

"I'm fine!" Skycloud growled. "Why'd you do that anyway?!"

"To save your kits. And you," Mossclaw spoke.

"Leave me alone, Mossclaw," his mother growled, padding back to camp.

Mosspaw was surprised as his mother's attitude, though he had thought the same when he had become better friends with Fernpaw. There had been times when he had been angry.

Mosspaw watched now as Smokefur turned into the leader. He watched Skycloud continue to care for Petalnose's kits, and he watched her slowly grow towards Mossclaw and explain more of

her life to him.

The scene changed now, showing Skycloud cry out in pain. Her kits were coming! Mosspaw watched as the tiny Ashclaw was born first, Cindertail following behind. His father stood by the nursery the entire time.

Mossclaw padded up to Skycloud and smiled. "Those are beautiful kits. I'm sure Blacktail would be proud." Mosspaw noticed the tears in his mother's eyes as she looked down on her two newborn kits that she would never properly raise.

Mosspaw saw now the friendship between Mossclaw and Skycloud grow. Cinderkit and Ashkit began to grow. Mosspaw watched how happy and joyous they were. He could hardly imagine it.

He couldn't help but smile to see the lovely warrior Mintpaw has become and how great Petalnose's kits were as apprentices.

He watched as Skycloud and Mossclaw watched the sunset and how she fell asleep beside him. They were in love, and nothing could stop them.

The scene had changed, this time showing a worried look on Skycloud's face, and Mosspaw knew why. She had found out she was expecting him. She had found out that Mossclaw would be the father of Mosspaw.

He watched as Skycloud nervously asked Mossclaw to go on a walk, and he could tell she was going to tell him the news. Before she could, however, they were stopped in their tracks by a familiar cat. Tooth!

Mosspaw had not seen Tooth this angry and vicious before. His teeth were bared, and Mossclaw hissed at the Tooth, claiming that he had to get out of SnowClan territory.

He watched as the two began to argue. Tooth lunged towards Skycloud but was thrown off by Mossclaw who snarled in disgust.

Tooth was obviously stronger than Mossclaw though, for he threw him near the cliff. Mossclaw struggled to keep balance, but his

claws began to slip as he held onto the edge.

Skycloud screeched for Mossclaw.

"JUMP OR I KILL THE SHE-CAT!" Tooth growled angrily.

Mossclaw disappeared, and Mosspaw watched the tears gather in his mother's eyes. Oh, but Mossclaw was not dead. Tooth discovered him hanging onto a plant at the edge.

Tooth now pinned down Skycloud and aimed his claws at her throat. "Jump or she dies." Mosspaw noticed the desperation for help in Skycloud's eyes, and she noticed her pain as Mossclaw let go from the plant and fell.

Skycloud pushed him off. "YOU MONSTER!" Tooth was smart though, and he threw her over too.

Mosspaw watched in terror as his mother hit the sharp water below and yowled in pain. She gasped, looking around for Mossclaw. She noticed the tom lying injured in the shallow stream.

"Mossclaw," she whispered.

Before he could reply, Tooth had grabbed Skycloud away and began to drag her away from her love.

"I love you, Mossclaw!" Skycloud yowled. "Please know that!"

Mossclaw looked up, and Mosspaw could tell he was in pain. "

"I love you too, Skycloud! I'll come back for you!" he yowled.

Tooth then layed Skycloud in a bush. Confused, Mosspaw watches in horror as Tooth leapt on his father. Mosspaw had to turn away, and he heard his mother's cries as the river turned to red and she was whisked away by Tooth.

Soon, everything faded, and Mosspaw was back in StarClan, though this time, he was not alone. All of the cats he had seen in the memories were here now, and Skycloud smiled.

"I know it was a terrible ending that went down between Mossclaw and me, but now you know the truth. You know your past, and I couldn't be prouder."

Mosspaw smiled, and he turned towards the cats. "And I get to meet everybody?"

"Yes," Skycloud replied. "You must say your good-byes to us all now that your journey has come to an end."

Mosspaw nodded, and Skycloud disappeared. He slowly padded forward, first coming face to face with Tooth, the cat who had killed his father.

Mosspaw opened his mouth to say something, but he could not. He could not look at this cat the same way again.

"I'm sorry, Mosspaw," Tooth said, lying his tail on Mosspaw's shoulder as he came by.

Now he saw Oceanpaw and Mousekit who smiled at Mosspaw. Mosspaw let out a smile too, continuing by. He now saw Rosefur and Olivetail, Skycloud's parents.

"You've grown up to be such a lovely tom," Rosefur said, letting it a gentle smile.

Mosspaw gave a polite nod and a "thank you" before he moved on. Now he came face to face with Blacktail.

"Blacktail," he breathed slowly.

Blacktail smiled. "I'm glad you finally know who I am now," he said, smiling as Mosspaw walked by.

Mosspaw knew who was ahead. Petalnose. The she-cat as beautiful as ever, and she sat, smiling at Mosspaw.

"Don't be shy," Petalnose laughed as Mosspaw padded closer to her.

"You're very brave," Mosspaw admitted.

Petalnose laughed. "Why, thank you, but we're brave, aren't we? We just need to know when to be courageous."

Mosspaw walked past his aunt, spotting his mother and father now. A smile grew on his face, and he ran.

"MOTHER! FATHER!"

He felt his mother and father close in around him, and he felt Skycloud gently lick his ear. Mosspaw gazed up into his father's eyes and smiled.

"My, Mosspaw, you've grown!" Mossclaw exclaimed.

"I wish I got to know you when you were alive," Mosspaw said to his father.

"But you do," Mossclaw said. "And I'll always be right here," he said, pointing to Mosspaw's heart.

"As will I," Skycloud spoke.

"I love you both very much," Mosspaw admitted.

"We do too," Mossclaw said.

Skycloud nodded. "Good-bye for now, Mosspaw. The cat you seek lurks nearby, and Moonpool is not so far away."

"Good-bye," Mosspaw waved. Everything began to fade, and he smiled as he saw his mother and father one last time.

He woke up under his tree and got up. He let out a yawn and stretched, then looked out ahead. He had a mission to complete.

Chapter 18

Mosspaw quickly walked across the forest, searching left and right. He knew Moonpool was nearby, and he knew the cat he had thought died would be here too.

Mosspaw didn't know where to look. He did not know where to go. All he could do was walk. All he could do was search.

Evening was upon him now as the sun slowly began to descend. He knew he needed to find the cat now. He needed to find Moonpool now. He did not want to wait another moment.

Mosspaw's heart sank as he now came out to a field. Wooden fences that protected two-leg nests were strung across the field, and he knew he had gone too far. Moonpool was nowhere near her.

Before he could turn away, however, he noticed two black ears prick up. He cautiously approached the bush where he had seen them, but the ears had disappeared now. Perhaps it had only been his imagination.

Mosspaw turned away again, though this time he heard the rustling of bushes. He turned again, this time seeing the tip of a tail fly by.

"Who's there?!" Mosspaw called out, his chest puffed out as if he were brave and courageous while he was truly terrified for his life.

He inched towards the bush now, his footsteps lightly touching the grass in the field. With each step he took, his heart beat faster. He was now close enough to the bush to brush the leaves aside.

He breathed in deeply, then pushed the leaves and branches aside. His jaw opened in surprise as he saw who sat in the bush.

"S-Snakekit?!" he exclaimed.

The black she-cat's green eyes sparkled as she saw her old friend, though they sparkled with sorrow, not joy. A pink collar was strung

across her neck, and a rusty gold coin was attached. She has gained weight too, and she slowly moved out of the bush.

"Snakekit, is that really you?" Mosspaw asked.

"Gloria now," Snakekit spoke, sitting down on the ground.

Mosspaw bounced with joy. "I can't believe you're alive! I thought you were dead, and I was terribly sorrowful! Oh, but now you're here! We can go to SnowClan together, Gloria! We could be mates, you could have kits!" He spoke quicker now. "We could be warriors together. Wait...why didn't you return if you didn't die?"

Gloria sighed and shuffled her paws. "Mosskit--"

"Mosspaw," he corrected her.

"Mosspaw," she corrected herself, "Everything you have mentioned sounds lovely, but alas, I cannot go to SnowClan, I can not be your mate..."

"But...why?" Mosspaw whimpered.

Gloria sighed. "Mosspaw, you remember when I disappeared in the river, correct?"

"Of course. I thought you died..."

"StarClan rescued me and aided me, but they also conveyed a message. While they told me where you and Ginger would be, they told me that I was only to come to the SnowClan forest with you, not to SnowClan itself."

"But why? We loved each other, Gloria. We wanted to train together," Mosspaw protested.

"I said the same. They told me that you had another destiny to fulfill, one that did not include me in it. I was heartbroken, Mosspaw. I wanted to tell you, but I wasn't allowed."

Everything had all made sense now. Gloria's depression during the journey had all been because she was getting closer to SnowClan,

she was nearing the day when she had to leave him.

"They told me they would send me a sign, and they did, Mosspaw. That fox was not there to hunt, it wasn't there to make a burrow. That fox was a sign from StarClan that was supposed to lead me away from you. As much as I didn't want it to happen, it had to. And now you know the truth, Mosspaw."

"But Gloria, what happened to you after? How did you find me?" Mosspaw asked.

"The fox scampered off as soon as I was far enough away from SnowClan. I then made the journey back to my home."

"You traveled all the way back?!" Mosspaw exclaimed.

Gloria nodded. "Yes. My owners were thrilled to find me. They made me an indoors cat from then on. My name was no longer Snakekit, but Gloria once again. I got this pink collar, and I was taken to the cutters one day. After that day, I've never been much into exercise or playing. Naps and food were what brought me joy. My owners moved to the neighborhood a few moons ago where StarClan came to me and told that you would be coming. I've come into this field every day to wait for you and tell you the truth, and now you've come."

"Oh, Gloria, I've missed you," Mosspaw purred, rubbing his cheek against hers.

Gloria purred her familiar purr, and she licked his cheek. "I know, I did too."

"Gloria, please come with me. I still love you. Oh, I love you so much. Please," Mosspaw begged.

Gloria shook her head. "I love you too, Mosspaw, but I can't come."

Mosspaw sighed. "I was expecting that response. Is this good-bye then?"

Gloria nodded. She nuzzled Mosspaw with affection. "Good-bye, Mosspaw. I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too," Mosspaw spoke, tears forming in his eyes. "Do you know where Moonpool is? I've been trying to find it."

Gloria nodded, pointing her tail to the woods that lied up ahead. "Through those trees and you'll find it."

"Thank you," Mosspaw said, beginning to walk away. As he walked, he turned, gazing at Gloria one last time.

"Good-bye and good luck!" she shouted, waving her tail at time.

Mosspaw smiled and dipped his head. He looked at Gloria one last time, for he knew this was the last time he would ever see her. He then padded off through the woods.

Mosspaw rushed through the woods. He wanted to cry. He would never see the glorious she-cat again, and he was mad at StarClan for sending her away. The last thing he wanted to do was go to Moonpool, but he knew he had to.

Mosspaw looked around but saw no pool. Frustrated, he continued to run through the woods. He stopped, beginning to hear the sound of rushing water.

He slowly padded through some bushes now, wondering if Moonpool lied just around here. He padded through the trees and bushes, coming across a pool with sparkling blue water. Suddenly, he remembered everything here. Everything seemed familiar.

Moonpool! He had found it after moons of searching. Now, Mosspaw padded towards the swirling pool of water. He smiled, and he laid down next to the pool. He did not have to touch his nose to the pool, however.

A cat appeared in the water before he had the chance. Mosspaw could not recognize the cat at first, but soon it came into view. Mosspaw couldn't believe his eyes. It was Fernpaw! The cat in the water was Fernpaw!

Suddenly, it all made sense. He had been told to look for something special. What he had not realized was that she special thing he had been searching for was not in these woods, but it had been with

him all along. That thing was Fernpaw.

Fernpaw. Mosspaw's heart ached as he thought about her. He knew now that he truly loved her, and he had to get home to her as soon as possible. Mosspaw backed away from Moonpool and began to run through the woods. He needed to get home. He needed to be back with Fernpaw.

Chapter 19

Mosspaw had been traveling for nearly a moon, trying to somewhat remember the path he had taken back to SnowClan when he had been just a small kit. He had tried to recognize the scents, the forest, but it seemed he would be journeying longer than he had expected.

StarClan would give him a sign every once in awhile, though he would have to look for himself most of the time.

Today, however, Mosspaw awoke with confidence. He seemed to recognize the scents and the forest, and he knew he would be arriving back home soon.

He wondered what the reaction of his clan would be. Would they be angry, relieved? He hoped Fernpaw wasn't angry at him. He had made this journey for her, after all.

Fernpaw. Mosspaw missed her as he traveled every day. He just wanted to get home to her and tell her how much he loved her, though it seemed to take longer every day, and he wondered if she had a mate and kits now. Mosspaw hoped not.

Mosspaw padded through the forest in the early morning. Autumn leaves fell slowly, the colors on the trees a bright red and orange. He barely remembered the last autumn, for he had just been a small kit back then, trapped in Tooth's lair.

So much had changed since then, and Mosspaw felt the leaves swirl around him. He vaguely remembered playing with these leaves with Tooth's son. What was his name again? Mosspaw was not sure.

Spotting a mouse nearby, Mosspaw pounced, catching it in his grip. He killed it quickly and ate it. He needed a full stomach if he were to attempt to get to SnowClan today.

Mosspaw noticed the hills ahead, and he smiled. He now knew where he was. He had crossed these hills with Ginger and Gloria six moons ago. Now, he would be crossing these hills alone.

Mosspaw walked a little faster now, hoping to get closer to SnowClan, though he knew he would probably have to spend the night on those hills before returning in the morning. He didn't know

if he would have the strength to make it by night.

More leaves fell, and Mosspaw smiled as they did. A bright sun hung up ahead, providing some warmth to Mosspaw. He knew once leaf-fall ended, the cold leaf-bare would come once again, though this time, Mosspaw would be safe in SnowClan and not the mountains.

Mosspaw raced through the forest now, the leaves swirling past him. He stopped, out of breath. He knew he couldn't make it to SnowClan by night, and he sighed, sitting down in the ground.

Catching his breath, he slowly drew in the dirt, sighing. He had to make it to SnowClan though by tomorrow. That was his promise.

Now ready to move again, he stood up beginning to walk towards SnowClan.

Throughout the day, Mosspaw had at times ran, walked, and stopped to eat or get a drink of water. He had tried to keep a fast pace, hoping to make it to SnowClan, but now the sun was beginning to fall, and he slowly trudged up the hill that separated him from his home.

The grass was dry from the hot summer, and it tickled Mosspaw's feet as he walked past it. Only a few trees sat on these hills, and he breathed heavily, knowing he was almost to the top. He walked quickly, the sun descending faster with each second.

Suddenly, Mosspaw got a burst of energy, and he ran, making it to the top of the hill. The sun finally descended now, and the sky was dark. Stars began to shine now, and Mosspaw sighed, knowing he would make it to SnowClan first thing in the morning.

Tired now, Mosspaw curled up next to a large rock and closed his eyes, dreaming of the next day that would change his life.

Chapter 20

Mosspaw awoke to see the sun slowly rising over the clans. He had to admit, these hills had such a great view of his home. He could almost see SnowClan's camp!

Excitement filled him, though nerves did too. What if Fernpaw had changed? What if everyone had changed?

Mosspaw did not let this get the best of him though, so he padded down the hill with confidence. He wondered if NightClan was behaving itself, and what about FoxClan? How were they?

The hills were beginning to disappear behind him as he trudged through the forest. Mosspaw tried to blend him, knowing some cats would be on morning patrol, though his white pelt stood out like a mouse in the middle of leaf-bare.

Mosspaw knew he was by the FoxClan border now, and he knew the SnowClan border was so close.

As he continued to walk, he swore he heard a noise, but he saw no cat. He continued on, smelling the familiar SnowClan scent. He had missed SnowClan so much. Now he placed a paw over the border and smiled. He was here. He was home.

Within a few seconds of crossing the border, Mosspaw noticed a patrol come by. He tried to duck, but there were no trees or plants nearby he could run to. They had already spotted him.

"Over there!" a white and golden she-cat yelled.

Mosspaw knew he could not hide, and he remained still until the patrol came into view. Mosspaw gasped, realizing the golden and white she-cat was Sunpaw, though she most likely had a warrior name by now.

Sunpaw stopped, at first gazing at Mosspaw in amazement,

but then uncertainty. "Who are you?" she growled.

"Relax, Sunpaw. It's me, Mosspaw," Mosspaw told her.

"It's Sunflash now," she hissed. "And how is that possible? You were thought to be dead! We couldn't track you any farther than the FoxClan border."

"Well, I'm here now, aren't I?" Mosspaw said.

Sunflash eyed him with suspicion, and she turned towards the others. "Are you sure this is the real Mosspaw?"

"Of course he is!"

Mosspaw recognized Reedpaw among the others, a smile lit on his face. "I'm glad you came back, Mosspaw."

"Yes, where exactly have you been?" Sunflash asked.

"If you take me to camp, I'll explain," Mosspaw said.

Sunflash eyed him once again, but she did not refuse. Mosspaw walked with the others deep into the territory towards the SnowClan camp. This reminded Mosspaw of when he had arrived as a kit. He had been scared then, but now, he was confident.

Arriving into camp, the news had come that Mosspaw had arrived back. Before Mosspaw could even have a chance to find Fernpaw and speak to her, he was pushed away to Smokestar's den.

"Mosspaw," Smokestar said, welcoming the tom in. "You've sure grown since the last time I saw you."

Mosspaw hadn't really realized how much he'd grown. He was the age of a warrior by now. Maybe Smokestar would even make him one.

"I guess so," Mosspaw said.

"Where have you been the last six moons?" Smokestar asked.

"StarClan sent me on a mission to discover my past," Mosspaw told him. He left out the part with Fernpaw. It would only make it more awkward.

"Why could they not tell you here?" Smokestar asked.

"My mother is odd like that, Smokestar," Mosspaw said. "But I'm done learning, and I know everything now, so I've returned."

"I see. I wonder how your hunting and fighting skills have improved since then," Smokestar said, beginning to circle around him. He suddenly swiped at Mosspaw, though Mosspaw was fast, blocking it in time.

"Well done," Smokestar said. "And your hunting skills?"

"I've learned patience, believe me," Mosspaw said. They both laughed, and Smokestar smiled at Mosspaw.

"Are you really willing to come back to the clan? Or will you run off again?"

"I promise I won't, Smokestar. StarClan has messed with me enough. I promise I'll protect the clan even more. I'll improve my fighting and hunting skills and remain loyal to this clan," Mosspaw said with all honesty.

Smokestar smiled. "Well then, Mosspaw. I think you're ready to be introduced to the clan, but this time, as a warrior."

Mosspaw smiled, beginning to bounce up and down. "You mean it?! I can become a warrior?!"

Smokestar smiled. "I do. Follow me."

Mosspaw nodded, following Smokestar out of his den. Cats had gathered, waiting to see how Smokestar would handle the situation. Mosspaw could not spot Fernpaw through the crowds, and he sighed. Where was she?

He followed Smokestar up on the rock, just like he had done when he was being made an apprentice. There was no need to yowl

since all the cats were already gathered beneath. They looked up at Smokestar with wide eyes, wondering what he had chosen to do with Mosspaw.

"Cats of SnowClan," Smokestar began. "It is known that Mosspaw, after being missing for six moons, has rejoined us. I know many of you may believe he is a traitor, running away from the clans, but this is not the case. Mosspaw was sent on a mission by StarClan, and now he has fulfilled it, returning to his home.

"I know this scene seems familiar. I can remember when Mosspaw was here and we were trying to decide if he truly were Skycloud's son. I know now that after six moons, Mosspaw is Skycloud's son, no doubt."

Cats cheered in agreement. They smiled at Smokestar, and Mosspaw too. Mosspaw noticed the tip of Fernpaw's ear, though the other cats covered up the rest of her face, not allowing Mosspaw to see her expression.

"And so, I have decided to make Mosspaw a warrior. Mosspaw," Smokestar said, his eyes looking deeply into Mosspaw's. "I call upon my warrior ancestors to look upon this apprentice. He has trained hard to follow your noble code, and I grant him to you as a warrior in return. Mosspaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even if it means losing your life?"

"I do, Smokestar," Mosspaw said. Silence was present in the camp. The cats looked at both Smokestar and Mosspaw, waiting to hear what Mosspaw's warrior name would be.

"Then I give you the warrior name of Mossheart, after your gentle and loving heart!"

Cats cheered, beginning to shout, "MOSSHEART! MOSSHEART!"

Mossheart smiled, looking at the crowds of cats. He waved his tail, glad to be home, glad to be with his people again.

As the crowds slowly moved away, Mossheart sprang down

looking for Fernpaw. Before he could even search though, he was knocked to the ground. Mossheart skidded across the dirt, and a figure stood over him.

It was Fernpaw! Mossheart smiled, though she didn't. Her eyes were pierced deeply into his, and she had a look of anger on her face.

"Hi?" Mossheart said.

"You! Where have you been for six moons?!" Fernpaw spat. "You gave me a heart attack, disappearing like that! I cried every night, Mossheart! I waited for you! My warrior ceremony was supposed to be great, but it wasn't because you weren't there. I failed my exam because of you, and I had to wait a few sunrises before I could try again!"

"I'm sorry," Mossheart told her. "If you let me up, I can explain. Please, Fernpaw."

"Fernbranch," she corrected him. Slowly, she lifted her paw away, and Mosspaw stood up. He hated to see her so angry, but he knew this was the only way to convince her to not be mad.

"My mother sent me on a mission to discover my past, but that wasn't all of it. She told me that each cat discovers that special something that makes them worth living for sometime in their life. She told me I would discover this on the journey. I had no idea what she meant, Fernbranch, honestly. She told me to go to Moonpool and look inside because I would discover it there. I found Moonpool, Fernbranch, and when I looked inside, I didn't see me as a leader or me with my family. I saw you...That's the special thing I needed to survive, Fernbranch. You. I love you, Fernbranch."

Mossheart expected another swipe, but instead, she nuzzled him. "I love you too, Mossheart," she said. Tears gathered in her eyes, and Mossheart smiled and licked her cheek. He realized how much he had grown, for now he stood over her.

"Mates?" he asked.

Fernbranch nodded. "Mates."

Mossheart padded inside the warriors den with her, asking about what had happened to her in six moons. Most of it were depressing details about how much she mourned because of him, but she talked some about her warrior ceremony and her life as a warrior.

As the sun descended, they curled up together in the warriors den, and he smiled, knowing he was home at last, and he would always stay with her. Fernbranch was now his mate and love, and that was all that mattered.

Chapter 21

Mossheart awoke to see Fernbranch's green eyes staring directly at him. "Good morning," she mewed.

"Good morning," Mossheart spoke.

They headed outside into the morning light. It seemed morning patrols had already left, and mentors and their apprentices were beginning to head out.

"So, what happened...while I was gone?" Mossheart asked.

"What do you mean?" Fernbranch asked.

"Like, who died? What cats gave birth? Who are the new apprentices?" Mossheart asked.

Fernbranch smiled. "C'mon, I'll show you them. Let's go to the nursery first," she told him.

Mossheart nodded, following her into the nursery. Inside he spotted familiar she-cats. Wavestorm sat in the den, flicking her tail. She did not look pregnant, and Mossheart tilted his head, confused.

"She decided to be a permanent nursery queen," Fernbranch whispered.

Mossheart nodded, and the other cats looked up, smiling. "Mossheart, you're here," Wavestorm said. "Last time you visited the nursery you were just a small apprentice."

"I just came to check with everyone. It's been awhile," Mossheart said. He turned, seeing Dovewing in the nursery, her stomach swollen. It seemed she would give to Cloudfur's kits soon. He also recognized Dawnpool with three kits of her own. One was a ginger tom. The other was a white and ginger she-cat. The last was a gray tabby tom who resembled Dawnpool.

"Oh, Dawnpool, I didn't know you had kits. Who's the father?" Mossheart asked.

"Blazeheart," Dawnpool proclaimed. "The ginger tom is Hailkit, the white and ginger she-cat, Breezekit, and the gray tom is Marshkit."

"Well, congratulations," Mossheart told her.

Mossheart turned, noticing a ginger she-cat, one he had never seen before. The she-cat had three kits beside her. They looked as if they were to be apprentices soon.

"Who are you?" Mossheart asked.

"Flameclaw," the she-cat replied. "You obviously don't know me. I'm a RiverClan cat who joined this clan quite recently. These are my three kits," she spoke.

"Who's your mate?" he asked.

"A tom you would not know either. His name is Barkfern, and he's a LightningClan cat."

Mossheart tilted his head, confused at all these cat and clan names. "Oh, well, nice to meet you," he spoke.

He turned, noticing a familiar calico she-cat. She had three small kittens with her that looked newly born.

"Leafpaw?" he asked.

She smiled. "Leafwhisker now," she purred. "These are my three kits, Mosskit, Riverkit, and Shadekit. My mate is Darkjaw. I'm sure you remember him."

Mossheart nodded. "Yes, I do. Well, it was nice to see all of you," he said, exiting the den with Fernbranch.

"So who is Flameclaw?" Mossheart asked, confused.

"She's got a long history," Fernbranch told her. "Apparently

she was raised in RiverClan and got sent on a journey as an apprentice. Apparently she met Barkfern on the journey. They came back to RiverClan and their clan went missing. I guess she's been a rogue for awhile. She even talked about living with wolves. It sounds like mouse dung to me. Apparently she and Barkfern joined SnowClan because she was expecting kits."

"She looks like an older she-cat," Mossheart said.

Fernbranch nodded. "Yes, she is. Quite old to be having kits. But then again, Dovewing is too."

Mossheart nodded. "So, who became a warrior?"

"Well, a lot of cats," Fernbranch said. "I mean, I became a warrior as did Sunflash, Honeyleap, Moonstorm. And then there's Gorgeleap, Coalblaze, Rainfoot. A bunch of cats. Reedpaw and his siblings are being made warriors soon. And of course, Wavestorm and Snowtail's kits are apprentices. Applewhisker's too."

"I forgot to ask about Applewhisker's kits," Mossheart said. "When were they born?"

"Awhile ago," Fernbranch told him. "Two toms and a she-cat. Marshpaw, Pinepaw, and Honeypaw."

"Wow, a lot of new cats," Mossheart spoke.

Fernbranch nodded. "By the way, I wouldn't talk to Coalblaze if I were you."

"Why not?" Mossheart asked.

"Well, he was in love with Dawnpool, but she rejected him. Now Blazeheart's her mate and she has three kits, and well, Coalblaze is in some sort of depression. A lot of drama goes on between those two. Only Rainfoot and Featherwing can calm him."

"Featherwing?"

"Yeah, from Wavestorm's first litter? I think she's got a thing for him, though it's hard to tell," Fernbranch told him. "C'mon, let's

go hunting. I can't wait to get into those woods with you again."

"Alright," Mossheart said. Before he could move, however, Reedpaw burst out of the apprentice den.

"Mossheart!" the tom screeched.

"Reedpaw, you've grown," Mossheart said, seeing how the tom was almost his size.

"I know," Reedpaw said. "You have too. I'm so glad you're back!"

"Me too," Mossheart smiled. "How has your training gone?"

"Great!" Reedpaw exclaimed. "Fabulous! Congratulations on becoming mates with Fernbranch. I always knew you two would end up together."

"How did you know about that?" Mossheart asked.

"The whole clan knows about it!" Reedpaw told him.

Mossheart looked up at Fernbranch. "Probably Moonstorm telling the whole clan," she mumbled.

"So, do you have any love interests?" Mossheart asked.

Reedpaw blushed and looked down. "Not really," he said.

"C'mon, yes you do," Mossheart laughed.

"Alright, I like Mousestripe," he said. "Smokestar's other daughter. I think she likes me too."

Mossheart smiled. "That's great! Well, I'm going hunting with Fernbranch. See you later," he said.

"You're coming to my warrior ceremony this afternoon, right?" Reedpaw called.

Mossheart nodded, padding away with Fernbranch.

"It's nice for you to still talk to him," Fernbranch said. "He was sad when you went missing."

"I'm sure he was," Mossheart said.

"Not as sad as I was," Fernbranch murmured.

"I'm sorry, Fernbranch. I didn't want you to cry over me. I thought I would be out there for less than a moon. I was wrong," Mossheart said.

"It's alright, you're here now," Fernbranch said, licking his cheek. "And that's what matters."

Mossheart smiled. "Remember when we were apprentices, and we came out here at night?" Mossheart asked.

Fernbranch nodded. "It seems like yesterday."

The two headed in the woods and hunted like old times. Though this time, it was different. He and Fernbranch were mates now, something Mossheart had always wanted. He still thought about Gloria though, wondering what she was up to now. She must've been enjoying her life as a kittypet.

The two came back with three squirrels, a lot of prey since leaf-fall had taken its toll on the forest. It was nothing compared to all the prey they had gotten before.

Fernbranch and Mossheart shared a squirrel as other cats chatted about the warrior ceremony that would take place shortly. Once they had finished, Smokestar's yowl rang across the camp as he invited the cats to come forward.

Fernbranch and Mossheart padded towards the tall rock, Mossheart excited to see Reedpaw and his siblings become warriors. He still remembered the awkward conversation he had with Littlepaw that one day...

"Reedpaw, Littlepaw, Larkpaw, and Swiftpaw, come forward," he said. The apprentices padded up the rock, their faces bright and smiling.

"I call upon my warrior ancestors to look upon these four apprentices. They have trained hard to follow your noble code, and I grant them to you as warriors in return. Reedpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code even at the cost of your own life?" Smokestar asked.

Reedpaw nodded. "I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name of Reedtail," Smokestar announced.

He continued on, giving Littlepaw the name as Littlepelt, Larkpaw the name of Larkheart, and Swiftpaw the name of Swiftstep.

"REEDTAIL! LITTLEPELT! LARKHEART! SWIFTSTEP!" the clan cried. Mossheart cried with them, excited for them to become warriors.

He watched as Reedtail rushed down towards Mousestripe. Mossheart couldn't help but smile. He turned to Fernbranch and smiled, nuzzling her.

"I'm so glad you're back," she whispered.

Chapter 22

Mossheart crouched to the ground, spotting a small mouse in front of him. Its nose wiggled as it crawled on the ground, and it seemed lost, looking for some place to rest for the storm that would take place.

Mossheart leapt, catching it in his paws. The mouse struggled, and Mosspaw stared at it for awhile, wondering whether or not he should let the mouse free. He shook his head then killed it, holding the dead mouse in his jaws.

"Nice catch," Fernbranch told him. She looked up at the sky, seeing the dark clouds form up ahead. "First leaf-fall storm, I guess. Soon, snow will fall."

"Don't remind me," Mossheart groaned, burying the mouse in the ground. "It's a miracle I even found this mouse. Prey is becoming so scarce now."

"Wasn't it scarce on your journey?" Fernbranch asked.

"Well, I was just a kit back then, and I really only had to feed myself. This time it's different. We've got to take care of the clan-the warriors, apprentices, queens, kits...How do you deal with all this stress?" Mossheart asked.

"Relax, we're always fed," Fernbranch told him. "As leaf-bare approaches, I'm afraid that means greencough will come too."

"Greencough?" Mossheart asked. He remembered Ginger vaguely mentioning it to him once, though he had forgotten what it was.

"A deadly cough," Fernbranch said. "Half of the time, it kills cats. If we're able to keep up our energy though, I'm sure it'll be fine."

"Oh," Mossheart said. "Should we continue to hunt?" he asked. Before Fernbranch could answer, the first raindrop fell on his nose.

Fernbranch looked up into the dark sky. "I guess not. Grab the mouse, and we'll head out of here."

Mossheart nodded. "Sure," he said, digging up the mouse. He and Fernbranch padded back to camp as the rain begin to fall. At first, only light drops landed on the ground, though as they continued, wind had begun to pick up, throwing the leaves off the trees. He and Fernbranch made it back to camp with the damp mouse, the only piece of prey they were able to find.

"That's a big storm coming in," Smokestar said with awe. "It'd be best if you two got in the den. I wouldn't be surprised if there were some thunder in lightning. This is probably the last rainstorm we'll see until new-leaf."

Mossheart dropped the mouse on the fresh-kill pile, and it was then he noticed how low the pile was. He remembered what Fernbranch told him though, and this gave him hope. Together, they padded inside the warriors den, curling up close together to keep warmth.

Mossheart remembered back to his journey when Gloria had shivered with her thin pelt, and he had kept her warm with his thick one. He thought of that now as she sat close to Fernbranch. Her pelt was thin as well, and her bright green eyes gazed into Mossheart's. It was as if he was looking at Gloria.

"What?" Fernbranch asked.

"Nothing," Mossheart said, turning away. It had been nearly a moon since Mossheart's return, and he already felt back at home. He knew every name of every cat now, and he had grown closer to some cats he had rarely talked to before.

Mossheart yawned, realizing how tired he was. It was only the afternoon, though he had been through a lot the previous morning, frantically searching for prey with Fernbranch.

"You can lie down and sleep if you want," Fernbranch told him, resting her tail on his shoulder.

"Alright," Mossheart said, lying down. Fernbranch purred and

brushed her pelt against his. He closed his eyes, feeling comforted by Fernbranch's love for him. He felt her lightly lick his cheek before he fell asleep.

Crash. Boom. The sound of thunder awoke Mossheart. He opened his eyes to see all the cats crammed into the warriors den now. Mossheart turned around, seeing Fernbranch beside him.

"How long was I asleep?" he asked.

"It should be around evening now," Fernbranch told him. "I'm starving, though no cat wants to go outside. All our prey is getting damp."

"I can get it," Mossheart groaned.

"It's storming out there," Fernbranch said, blocking his path. "Every cat will want you to get prey for them. Maybe we should just skip our meal tonight."

"I guess so," Mossheart sighed. "But what about the queens in the nursery? Shouldn't they have something to eat?"

"Alright, fine. Since you're dying to be useful, go bring them some prey. Please don't go far though. I don't want you getting hurt," Fernbranch told him.

Mossheart rolled his eyes and headed outside. The wind and rain slammed against his pelt, nearly knocking him off his feet. The prey was wet and drenched in mud, though there was nothing he could do about it. He grabbed a rabbit and a squirrel, the most decent pieces of prey, for the nursery queens, and he headed towards the nursery.

As he walked though, he swore he could see two eyes through the rain. They looked like his mother's eyes. He dropped the prey and stood in awe, not even paying attention to the coldness that had spreaded throughout him.

"Skycloud?" he asked.

"Mossheart!" he heard. This was not his mother's voice though, and

he turned, seeing Fernbranch. "What are you doing?!"

Mossheart shook his head, seeing the eyes had vanished. He then rushed to the nursery, rain dripping off of him as he came in.

"Thank StarClan. We're starving!" Wavestorm mewed.

"Sorry, they're not the best pieces," Mossheart said.

"It'll do," Flameclaw spoke. "We'll all share them. Thank you for bringing them to us."

"No problem," Mossheart said, looking back outside.

"You're welcome to spend the night in here if you don't want to go back out there," Dawnpool told him.

"No, it's fine. I promised Fernbranch I would be back," he said, stepping outside. He saw a flash of lightning, and his eyes dazzled as he saw figures of cats move. He blinked, wondering what he had just saw. He heard the crash of thunder and began to hurry his way. Lightning flashed once more, and this time, he saw the figures of kits. Was it real? He wasn't sure.

"I'm going crazy," he muttered to himself. He still looked in the distance, wondering if there really were kits out there.

He looked to the warriors den, and he shook his head. "No, I have to find out what's out there," he said, beginning to head towards the forest.

"MOSSHEART!" he heard the screech of Fernbranch. He ignored her, continuing into the forest. The rain was not much better there, still pounding on Mossheart. He looked through the forest, spotting no cat.

Another boom of thunder came from up ahead, and he turned, wondering if he should head back. He continued on though, shivering from the freezing rain.

He heard the sound of footsteps, and he turned, seeing the figure of a cat running towards him. He wondered if this was the cat he had

seen in the lightning.

"Mossheart, you're crazy!" he heard Fernbranch's familiar mew. "What are you doing out here?!" she screeched, shivering from the rain.

"I-I thought I saw something," Mossheart spoke.

"What?"

"I thought I saw a cat and kits out here."

"There are no cats or kits out here. You're going mad. It's probably because of the cold rain. Come on, let's head back," Fernbranch told him.

"Alright," he sighed, following her. He made it back to the warriors den soaking wet. Fernbranch shivered, though there was nothing he could really do about it. He looked outside though, still wondering what he had seen. Was that really Skycloud? Was it StarClan trying to tell him something? He wasn't sure...

Chapter 23

A few days had passed since the storm, and Mossheart still wasn't exactly sure what he had seen that night. Fernbranch had been acting odd lately, probably scared for Mossheart after he went out into the storm, not that it mattered though. She still loved him.

Mossheart awoke early, only to be assigned on morning patrol. Fernbranch was not put on the patrol with him, something that rarely happened, and Mossheart groaned, knowing he would be spending the whole morning away from Fernbranch.

As the patrol started off, he felt a pelt brush against his, and he looked to see Reedtail smiling at him, Mousestripe by his side.

"Hey, Mossheart," Reedtail said.

"Hi," Mossheart replied. "Hi, Mousestripe."

Mousestripe gave a nod and smiled. "No Fernbranch today?" she asked.

Mossheart nodded. Reedtail and Mousestripe had become mates shortly after Reedtail's warrior ceremony. Mossheart was happy for the two and glad things had worked out between them. Mossheart gazed at Mousestripe now, seeing Smokestar in her. She looked so much like her father with her white and black pelt. The only thing different was her eyes. They were an icy blue, like her mother's.

The two padded ahead, leaving Mossheart behind with the rest of the patrol. Leaf-bare was almost upon them, and Mossheart guessed it would be less than a moon before the first snowflake drifted down from the sky and covered the ground. Prey would be scarce, and he was not looking forward to caring for the clan.

As they walked, Mossheart suddenly spotted a thin squirrel. His eyes widened, and he licked the corner of his lips. With less prey, he wasn't able to keep his stomach as full, and he leapt, catching the squirrel by its tail. It got free, beginning to scurry. Mossheart couldn't afford to lose the catch though. He chased after it, eventually grabbing onto its neck. He sunk his teeth into the squirrel, killing it instantly. He picked up his piece of prey like a champion.

Mossheart turned, realizing he had gotten away from the patrol. He buried the prey, promising to come back for it later. He then spotted the tip of Cloudfur's ear and padded off in that direction, finding the patrol once again.

"Where did you go?" Cloudfur asked.

"I caught a squirrel," Mossheart told him.

"Where is it?"

"I buried it," Mossheart told Cloudfur. "I'll get it once we return."

"Alright then," Cloudfur said. "It's good that there's still some prey around. I wonder what we'll do when leaf-bare comes. Did you see any other prey?"

Mossheart shook his head. "I'll keep my eye out, Cloudfur."

The rest of the patrol lagged on. With not much prey, it was boring, and the remarking of borders wasn't much fun either.

Mossheart shuddered as they padded by NightClan territory. He remembered back to the battle where he thought he would lose Fernpaw forever. It had only been a few days before he had left for his expedition. Now, the border was quiet and calm, like when he had first seen it,

"Were there any more threats from NightClan after I left?" Mossheart asked Cloudfur.

"A brand new leader- Silverstar," Cloudfur told him. "She

was the mate of the deputy, if you recall."

Mossheart nodded, remembering the outrage his clanmates had had when they thought Waterdrop and Featherwing had murdered the tom.

As the patrol ended, Mossheart left them to find his squirrel he had caught earlier in the morning. Mossheart sniffed the air, trying to pick up the scent. Remembering the path, he came across his hole once again, unburying it. The squirrel still perfectly laid in the hole, and Mossheart picked it up, heading back to camp.

He watched as Fernbranch ran up to him as he headed into the camp, smiling at the squirrel he had caught.

"Thank goodness some cats have found prey," Fernbranch told him. "The pile is getting low."

"I know," Mossheart told her. "Can you take it over there? Maybe we can share a mouse or something."

Fernbranch nodded, taking the squirrel over to the pile. There seemed to be one mouse left for the two to share, and they sat down together in camp, sharing a squirrel. Fernbranch nibbled a little of it, leaving the rest for Mossheart.

"Are you alright?" Mossheart asked.

"Fine," Fernbranch replied. "Actually, I—"

She was cut off by the sound of Cloudfur yowling for the mid-day patrol to come in. Mossheart turned to her. "Are you on that patrol?"

"No," Fernbranch told him. "I need to tell you something, actually."

"What?" Mossheart asked.

"Fernbranch!" the yowl of Wavestorm rang through the camp. "Come here for a second."

"Why is Wavestorm calling for you?" Mossheart asked.

"I don't know," she said, though it seemed she did as she willingly padded over to the she-cat to talk to her. Yawning, Mossheart decided to get some rest. Leaving Fernbranch to talk to the queen, he padded into the warriors den, curling up in his nest.

He closed his eyes, attempting to rest. At one point, Fernbranch padded into the den and snuggled near him, keeping him warm. He slowly fell asleep, reassured by her presence.

When he awoke, he saw she was gone, and it was nearly evening. Had he really slept for that long?

Mossheart padded into the camp, seeing Fernbranch chatting with Sunflash and Honeyleap. Her eyes brightened as she saw Mossheart, and she stood up, walking towards him.

"You finally woke up," she said.

Mossheart nodded. "I felt you next to me, but then you left when I woke up."

"I was going hunting," Fernbranch said. "I decided to leave you to rest."

"Oh," Mossheart said. "What was that thing you were going to tell me earlier? You got cut off, remember?"

"Oh, that," Fernbranch said, gazing down as she shuffled her paws. As she looked up, her face was full of worry. "Mossheart, I'm expecting our kits..."

Chapter 24

Mossheart's eyes widened. "You are?!"

Fernbranch gave a nod, still looking at her paws, not wanting to make eye contact with him whatsoever.

"That's great!" Mossheart said, licking her cheek. He noticed her belly was a bit bigger than it usually was.

"I wanted to tell you earlier, but we kept getting interrupted. You're one of the last to know," Fernbranch sighed. "I guess the others kept it a secret."

Mossheart felt his heart drop, a little disappointed he was one of the last to know. It didn't matter though because he loved her, and now, he would be a father.

Mossheart felt himself stiffen. Him as a father? How could that even happen?! How would he be prepared for this?! He and Fernbranch were fairly young warriors, him especially. He wasn't even fifteen moons, and now he would be raising kits.

He smiled at Fernbranch though, happy for both of them. "So, you were talking to Wavestorm today about this?"

Fernbranch nodded. "She's saving a spot for me in the nursery."

Mossheart nodded. He had forgotten that the queens would move to the nursery when expecting.

"Does Smokestar know yet?" he asked.

Fernbranch shook her head. "I plan to tell him today. So far I've told the queens, some of my friends, and you, of course. Soon our kits will be running around the nursery."

Mossheart nodded. "Indeed. Do you want me to come with you to talk to Smokestar?"

Fernbranch nodded. "Sure, I'd enjoy that. Come on," she said, walking with Mossheart to Smokestar's den. It felt odd, now that Fernbranch would be having kits. Would they still act the same? Probably not.

"Smokestar," Mossheart said.

The tom had his back to the front of the den, staring at the wall. He turned, and it was then Mossheart saw the gray on his muzzle. He looked so old and tired. Mossheart wondered how many

lives he had left.

"What is it?" he asked, standing up.

Mossheart looked to Fernbranch who gave a weak smile. "I'm expecting kits," she said.

Smokestar's eyes lit up. "Fabulous, Fernbranch! And congratulations, Mossheart! How long until they're born?"

"About a moon," Fernbranch said, staring at her belly.

"I'll announce to the clan. We always love hearing the news of more kits," Smokestar said.

Mossheart nodded, though he was a bit worried. He had heard Ginger tell stories of the kits born in leaf-bare. He heard some died from greencough, and he shivered.

"Cold?" Fernbranch asked.

Mossheart shook his head. "No, I'm fine," he told her.

Smokestar stood on the rock, cats already staring at him, curious to see what his announcement might be. With a yowl, the clan focused their eyes on him, ready to hear his message.

"I bring a short, yet joyous, announcement," Smokestar told them. "Fernbranch is expecting kits!"

A bit of cheer came from the cats, and with those words, he leapt down, and the other cats moved away. It was like no announcement had ever happened at all. Cats flooded by, wishing congratulations to Fernbranch and Mossheart.

Mossheart felt a tail on his shoulder, and he turned, seeing Reedtail and Mousetripe. "Congratulations," Reedtail said.

"Thank you," Mossheart said. He turned to Fernbranch and smiled. His life had changed in an instant.

It had been half a moon since Fernbranch's announcement. Her stomach had grown, and Mossheart knew she would be staying in the nursery constantly soon. It would only be so long until the kits were born.

Mossheart had been asking Smokestar for some advice, though he doubted it was very good advice, considering Smokestar had left Wavestorm once again and was with Lilywhisker. It was a never-ending drama.

Smokestar had admitted the mistakes he had made as a father though. He spoke to Mossheart, telling him to spend time with the kits in order for them to grow to him. Mossheart had been attentive, listening to Smokestar's advice. He prayed to StarClan he

would be a good father.

Mossheart padded to the nursery each day now, visiting Fernbranch. She had been on less patrols, only hunting every few sunrises. Today she was spending her afternoon in the nursery, chatting with the other queens.

Mossheart padded in, hearing the joyous screeches of kits playing, their mothers scolding them to calm down.

"Hey," Mossheart said, padding over to Fernbranch.

She smiled at him. "Hi. What's up?"

"Just checking on you," Mossheart said, sitting down beside her. He watched as one kit knocked down its sibling, laughing.

"Please tell me you're just having one kit," Mossheart begged.

Fernbranch laughed. "You better hope I don't have five."

"Five?!" Mossheart exclaimed.

Fernbranch nodded, pointing to Sunflash. She was mates with Wavestorm's son, Crowslash, and she had just given birth to five kits. The tiny kits lay by their mother's side, asleep. Mossheart wondered how she would ever be able to control five kits.

"You alright?" Fernbranch asked.

"What if I'm not a good father?" Mossheart asked her.

Fernbranch rolled her eyes. "I know you, Mossheart, and you'll be a great father."

"I never knew my father though," Mossheart admitted. "What am I supposed to do?"

Fernbranch thought for a moment. "Just love and care for the kits. You grew up with your mother, and you knew she loved you, right?"

Mossheart nodded. "Yes, very much."

"Then shed that love onto the kits, Mossheart. You'll be a great father, I know it."

Mossheart smiled. "Thanks. You'll be a great mother," he said, licking her cheek.

Fernbranch turned to Mossheart now in a hushed whisper. "Don't tell anyone, but I think Mousestripe might be pregnant."

"How would you know?" Mossheart asked.

"She's been a bit more plump than usual, though I'm sure I'm the only cat who has noticed."

"Well, Reedtail will be pleased if she is," Mossheart admitted. "By the way, do you know how many lives Smokestar has

left? He seems to be getting older each day."

"One or two, I think," Fernbranch told him. "Cloudfur will be leader soon. We'll have to see who he chooses as deputy. There are so many choices."

Mossheart nodded. "I know." He wondered if Cloudfur would choose him, though he had to laugh at this though. He doubted any cat wanted a leader who had spent more life outside of SnowClan than in SnowClan.

Saying good-bye to Fernbranch, he headed out of the nursery, leaving her to rest. He then padded to the fresh-kill pile and grabbed a small squirrel. He assumed leaf-bare would take place any day now.

As he ate, he noticed Mousestripe walk by, and he did realize she was a little bigger than usual, nothing too obvious though. Once leaf-bare came along though and cats were as thin as a stick, he assumed it would be obvious.

He gazed at the sunlit sky. There were no clouds, and it was a perfect day. It was cold though, colder than most days, and a light wind brushed against his pelt.

"StarClan, please help me be a good father," he whispered.

Chapter 25

Mossheart awoke, visiting Fernbranch in the nursery. It would only be a few days now until her kits were to be born, and she was staying in the nursery constantly, preparing to give birth.

"Good morning," Fernbranch said. She was as plump as a watermelon now as she waited to give birth. Mossheart still hoped he would be a good parent.

"Good morning," Mossheart said, licking her cheek. "Only a few days now until your kits are born."

Fernbranch nodded. "I know. I'm a bit scared as to what will happen when they are born," she admitted.

"It's alright," Mossheart told her. "Spottedmask and Tawnyheart are great medicine cats. They'll take care of you."

Fernbranch smiled. "Thanks," she said.

Feeling something whisk by him, Mossheart turned, seeing one of Sunflash's kits racing around.

"Branchkit, come back here!" Sunflash snapped. "Stop chasing after Lavenderkit," she said. She turned to a brown tabby tom. "Chesnutkit, you better be more gentler with Hollykit. She's your sister for StarClan's sake. Orangekit, are you still resting?"

Mossheart shuddered. He had to admit, Sunflash was doing a pretty good job at controlling five kits. Mossheart turned, seeing Mousestripe sitting in the nursery. She had turned out to be pregnant like Fernbranch said. Mossheart had been glad to see how thrilled Reedtail was.

The only problem was that Mossheart had spotted Thornfrost, Moonstorm's mate, constantly chatting to Mousestripe

lately. He had meant to ask Fernbranch what that was about.

"Want to come share a squirrel?" Mossheart asked.

"Alright," Fernbranch said. It took all her effort to stand up, and she slowly padded to the fresh-kill pile with Mossheart.

"So, what's up?" Fernbranch asked, nibbling a skinny squirrel. The pile had gone down less and less, and Mossheart had become hungry every day with the lack of food.

"I'm a bit curious about Mousestripe and Thornfrost," Mossheart told her. "What is that all about?"

Fernbranch laughed. "Oh, I remember all of that. It was all Honeyleap would talk about when we were apprentices. I guess when they were apprentices, Thornfrost really liked Mousestripe, but she was into Reedtail. Thornfrost ended up getting hurt, and Tawnyheart had screamed at Mousestripe. Soon enough, Thornfrost begin to hate her, getting a bit too close to Tawnyheart. He began to hang out with Sandnose. Don't you recall the very young elder who lost the feeling in both her legs?"

Mossheart nodded, realizing he hadn't seen the she-cat in awhile. What had happened to her?

"Well, I guess Mousestripe felt really harassed. She even tried to kill herself, if only Thornfrost hadn't come to her rescue, she'd be dead. I guess Sandnose began to feel harassed too as the friends turned on each other. She leapt into the water, and Mousestripe saved her. Mousestripe ran away before she could hear one of Sandnose's remarks. Sandnose jumped back in, only to become paralyzed. Thornfrost blamed all of it on Mousestripe, beginning to become close to Tawnyheart again. The two hadn't spoken in moons.

"Thornfrost eventually became mates with Moonstream. Her kits are nearly apprentices now. A badger tried to attack Moonstream as she gave birth, but Sandnose took the blow for her. Thornfrost still cannot forgive Mousestripe for all she's done, yet, he's been watching over her. I think he still cares about her."

"Well, that's a bit of drama," Mossheart laughed. He looked up, seeing a snowflake fall from the sky. "Mouse-dung," he spat.

Fernbranch looked up. "The first snowfall of leaf-bare. I should've known it would come soon. Can you take me back inside?"

Mossheart nodded, escorting his mate back into the nursery. He gave her the rest of the squirrel, knowing that she should keep her strength up.

"It's alright, Mossheart. You can have it," she told him.

"No," Mossheart argued, seeing the snow drift down below. "You need to remain strong, Fernbranch, especially when you give birth to your kits."

"Alright," Fernbranch sighed.

Leaving the nursery, the snow began to fall faster, beginning to cover the ground. Cats had moved the fresh-kill pile out of the way, not wanting the few pieces of prey to be spoiled by the snow.

Mossheart thought back to his journey across the mountains where he couldn't seem to get away from the snow. Even now, he got a disgusting feel in his stomach just looking at it drift down.

The journey across the mountains had been when Gloria was separated, only to return later. Mossheart remembered how thrilled he was seeing her, only to realize a few moons ago that she had been told not to complete the journey.

Mossheart didn't care as much though now. She was obviously enjoying her life as a kittypet, and Mossheart had a new mate and kits on the way.

Sighing, he closed his eyes, beginning to nap.

When Mossheart awoke, a few inches of snow coated the ground, and kits stumbled outside the nursery with their mothes, curious as to what the substance was. He watched as one of Sunflash's kits

tumbled with another.

Mossheart imagined him in several sunrises, playing with his kits in the snow. Fernbranch would watch and laugh along as they played, and they would all have fun together. He only hoped greenocough wouldn't spread by then.

Mossheart padded back into the nursery, deciding to check on Fernbranch. Tawnyheart was there, feeling her stomach. Fernbranch had daily check-ups now that she would be giving birth any day.

"I'd say in the next few sunrises or so," Tawnyheart told her. "They should come on time."

Fernbranch nodded, a look of worry on her face.

"Don't fret," Tawnyheart told her. "Giving birth to kits isn't that hard. Spottedmask and I will be with you," she assured her. It sounded to Mossheart like Tawnyheart had given birth to kits before. It couldn't be possible though since she was a medicine cat.

Fernbranch turned, seeing Mossheart. "Oh, hello!" she said.

Mossheart padded to her, smiling. "Have you seen the snow?" he asked.

"Just through the entrance of the den. Tawnyheart tells me I should rest for now. She doesn't want me moving a lot. I really don't want to give birth in the middle of the camp," Fernbranch laughed.

Mossheart laughed too. "You tell me if you need anything, and I'll bring it to you," Mossheart told her.

Fernbranch smiled. "Of course. Thank you for checking on me," she purred.

"No problem," Mossheart replied.

He padded out of the den. The snow had stopped now, and the sun had begun to set. Cats gathered for evening patrol, while Mossheart headed to his den. Cloudfur had been kind enough to put

him on less patrols since his mate was to give birth soon.

Closing his eyes, Mossheart fell asleep.

Mossheart awoke in the dark, hearing a noise. He peeked his head out of the den, seeing the snow fall. All the cats were asleep, and he tilted his head, wondering what the noise was.

He turned, heading back to his nest, when he heard a noise again. He froze. It sounded like Fernbranch!

Chapter 26

"MY KITS ARE COMING!"

The yowl swept through the camp, awakening those who slept peacefully. Mossheart rushed to the den, only to be pushed aside by Spottedmask and Tawnyheart. Tawnyheart held a stick in her mouth then shoved it in Fernbranch's.

"You grasp onto this when the pain comes," Tawnyheart instructed.

Fernbranch nodded weakly through the pain. She looked up at Mossheart, relieved he was here. Mossheart sighed, hating to see the sight of Fernbranch in pain.

Suddenly, Fernbranch let out a sharp mew, biting onto the stick.

"The first one is coming!" Spottedmask gasped.

Mossheart turned, seeing all the kits and queens had exited the den and had moved into the elder's den as she gave birth. Snow fluttered down from the sky. It was a cold leaf-bare night. Mossheart hoped Fernbranch wouldn't freeze.

Suddenly a bundle of white and gray fur slid on the moss. "A tom," Spottedmask said.

Mossheart sighed, relieved. The first kit had been born successfully. Were anymore kits going to be born?

Tawnyheart felt Fernbranch's stomach. "One or two more," she told Spottedmask.

Fernbranch licked the first kit, and Spottedmask pushed it forward to its mother for it to suckle.

Fernbranch screeched and bit the stick again as another kit was born. This kit was a silver blue kitten.

"Another tom," Tawnyheart told Mossheart. She felt Fernbranch's stomach one last time to see if any more were to be born. "One more."

Mossheart's eyes widened. Three kits? He would be caring for three! It would be a struggle, though he knew it was much better than five kits.

Fernbranch shut her eyes from the pain as the last kit was born. A small light gray kitten tumbled onto the moss.

"A she-cat," Spottedmask told Mossheart. She then turned to Fernbranch. "You're done."

Fernbranch sighed in relief, licking her three kits. "They're beautiful," Mossheart told Fernbranch.

Fernbranch smiled weakly. "I'm just glad it's over. Should we name them?" she asked.

Mossheart nodded. "Can we call the silver blue tom Jaykit?" she asked.

Mossheart nodded. "Yes, he can be called Jaykit."

"And the she-cat, Tinykit?" Mossheart nodded, looking at the tiny she-cat that tried to compete with her siblings.

"You name the last one," Fernbranch told him.

Mossheart looked at the white and gray tom. "Patchkit," he proudly said. "His name will be Patchkit."

Fernbranch smiled at this name then licked her kits once more. Queens and kits entered into the nursery, smiling at Fernbranch's three kits.

"Beautiful names," Spottedmask told Mossheart. "Tawnyheart is telling Smokestar right now."

Mossheart nodded, still gazing at Fernbranch and his three kits. "Patchkit, Jaykit, and Tinykit," he whispered, his new family.

Mossheart padded into the nursery early morning, seeing some of the kits playing around. They were about three weeks old now, the youngest in the nursery, though Mousestripe's kits would be born soon.

"Daddy's here!" Tinykit squeaked, running to her father.

Fernbranch smiled and looked up at her mate. "They were waiting for you."

Mossheart smiled, looking into Tinykit's blue eyes. He wondered where she had got them from since he and Fernbranch both had green eyes.

"Tinykit, are you going to play with us?" Jaykit asked. His green eyes resembled Fernbranch's, and Mossheart couldn't help but see Fernbranch everytime he looked into Jaykit's eyes.

"Hi, Daddy," Patchkit said, turning to his father. It was he who resembled his father the most with his white pelt and gray patches. His eyes were a light green, just like Mossheart's.

"Hi," Mossheart replied, licking the top of his head. "Are you getting along well with the other kits?"

"All the other kits are too big for us!" Tinykit complained.

"No, just for you, Tinykit," Jaykit told her. Fernbranch smacked Jaykit with her tail, and he looked at this mother. "What did I do?"

"Don't make fun of your sister's size," she lectured him. Mossheart was surprised how well Fernbranch could handle the kits.

"Mousestripe's kits will be born soon," Mossheart told his kits. "You'll have playmates then."

"I sure hope so," Patchkit sighed.

"Why don't we play?" Mossheart suggested.

Tinykit's eyes lighted up at the idea. "Yeah, Daddy, play with us!"

"He can be the NightClan cat," Jaykit said. "I'll be Jaystar, leader of SnowClan."

"I want to be leader!" Tinykit complained.

"I think I should be leader," Patchkit interrupted the fighting.

"Fine, Patchkit can be leader, but *I'm* deputy," Jaykit said. "You can be like a FoxClan warrior or something, Tinykit."

Mossheart watched as his daughter jumped up and down with anger. "No, I'm gonna be a SnowClan warrior!" she said. She leapt at Mossheart with surprise, laughing as she landed on him.

"Roar, I'm a big NightClan warrior!" Mossheart said.

"I'm Patchstar, and you won't destroy SnowClan!" Patchkit yowled, leaping onto his father. Jaykit followed behind, lightly pawing at his father.

Mossheart played with his kits for awhile until they grew tiresome. They then curled up beside their mother and fell asleep.

Fernbranch smiled. "You said you wouldn't be good at being a father. You've proven wrong."

Mossheart smiled. "I guess you're right." He turned to the sleeping kits one last time before slipping out of the nursery and into the warriors den.

Chapter 27

Mossheart's kits were a moon now, and for a moon he had played with them, becoming a great father towards them. He was proud of Fernbranch and his kits, and there was nothing more exciting than being a father.

As he returned from a patrol, he heard the sound of wails, a very familiar wail. He suddenly pricked his ears, realizing it was Fernbranch. "No, oh no," he gasped, wondering if one of the kits had picked up greencough. It had been spreading lately, and Smokestar had even lost a life from it.

Mossheart rushed into the den, Tawnyheart appearing moments later. "What happened?" she asked.

Mossheart turned, seeing Fernbranch with Jaykit and Patchkit. They were wailing, and Mossheart turned, seeing Tinykit lay on the moss. She was coughing up foul-smelling mucus.

Mossheart ran to his mate and kits. "Fernbranch what..." His voice trailed off. "Tawnyheart, you must treat her!" Mossheart spat.

Tawnyheart ran to Tinykit's side, sitting down next to the sick she-cat. "Tinykit, what happened?" Tawnyheart asked.

Mossheart watched as Tinykit's eyes fluttered open. "Yucky...black...smelly...water," she coughed.

Mossheart gasped, turning to Tawnyheart. "She must have drank poisonous water! Tawnyheart, you have to save her!" he pleaded, trying to ignore the wails from his mate and two healthy kits.

Mossheart watched as the calico she-cat bit her lip. She gave Tinykit a bit of yarrow, and the she-cat coughed up more foul-smelling liquid. Mossheart saw the fear in his daughter's eyes she looked at her family, frightened.

"Alright," Tawnyheart said, looking at the small kit. "Have one juniper berry, and you can rest," Tawnyheart told Tinykit. Mossheart felt a bit more relieved as she ate the berry then fell asleep, her constant vomiting stopping.

"Will she recover?" Mossheart asked once he knew she was asleep. "She's my only daughter. I don't want anything to happen to her..."

He watched as Tawnyheart's eyes flicked with uncertainty. "I'm not sure. We'll just have to wait and see," she said.

"Please take good care of her," Mossheart said, turning to Fernbranch and the kits in hopes to comfort them. Their cries continued on, and he shushed them, hoping for some peace.

Tinykit opened her eyes a bit later once Fernbranch and the kits had stopped crying. Her eyes turned from Mossheart's to Fernbranch. "I'm sorry, Mommy," she whispered. "I saw a puddle of black water, and I was thirsty, so I drank it," she mewed.

Mossheart turned to his daugher. "Tinykit, you never drink black water. You only drink water from rivers, streams, or lakes. You shouldn't be out in the forest alone."

"It was near the river," she mewed quietly. "I'm sorry, Daddy, very sorry." She sighed and rested her head, barely moving. Mossheart's eyes widened. Was she dead? Fernbranch gasped, about to scream. Tawnyheart spoke before she could though.

"She's still alive, but she's tired. I think the poison is out of her system," Tawnyheart told them. Mossheart turned, seeing Tinykit scratch her eyes every few seconds.

"Well, next time, don't drink black water," Mossheart said. He watched as she continued to scratch her eyes. "Tawnyheart, why is she scratching her eyes like that?"

He watched her bite her lip. "I don't know," she said. She nudged Tinykit, the she-cat opening her eyes slowly. Mossheart gagged. They were puffy and red, black liquid dripping down from

them.

"The poison," he heard Tawnyheart whisper.

He saw her hold up three claws, looking at Tinykit. "How many claws am I holding up?" she asked.

Mossheart watched in grief as his daughter squinted. "Four," she guessed.

"Her sight!" Mossheart gasped. He turned to Tawnyheart. "She won't go blind, will she?"

"I'm not sure," Tawnyheart said. She exited the den, coming back with a deathberry and some catmint. She held them out in front of Tinykit. "What color are they?"

Mossheart watched as his daughter squinted again. "They're both red!" she exclaimed.

Mossheart felt his stomach churn, and Tawnyheart turned to him. "She's colorblind, Mossheart. The poison has caused this. I'm not sure if it's permanent yet or if it will turn into complete blindness."

"My baby is blind!" Mossheart wailed in pain and grief. Soon enough, Fernbranch and the kits began to do the same, following after their father.

"*Color*blind," she told him, emphasizing on "color".

"What does it matter?" Mossheart spat. "She's losing her sight!"

Tawnyheart sighed again. "I already told you that I'm not sure if it's permanent or not. She may just be colorblind."

Mossheart continued to wail, Fernbranch sobbing into his pelt. He watched Tinykit as she looked around, frantically trying to stop her family from crying.

"SHUT UP, MOSSHEART!" Tawnyheart spat. "You're making

your daughter nervous!"

"YOU'RE MAKING ME NERVOUS!" he hissed, running out of the den. How could this happen? How could StarClan curse his kit like this?

"OH, WELL SORRY FOR DOING MY JOB AS MEDICINE CAT!" Tawnyheart spat in the center of the camp. "Would you have preferred me to lie to you?! Tinykit is colorblind! Get over it!"

"Colorblind! I don't care!" Mossheart spat. "My kit is different from everyone else!" he hissed, running into the woods. He ran past trees, snow falling off the branches as he ran.

He heard footsteps behind him, and he stopped. Tawnyheart caught up with him. He braced himself for another lecture.

"Is that all you care about? Her being the same?" Tawnyheart asked. "Just accept her for who she is, Mossheart. She gets some colors confused every once in awhile. What's so bad about that?" She stopped, her voice turning into a hush whisper. "I know what it's like, having a kit that's different from others. Accept her for who she is for her own sake, Mossheart."

"How would you know?!" Mossheart hissed.

He watched as she began to twitch nervously. "That's not important. What is important is that you start accepting Tinykit for who she is."

"Tawnyheart, are you alright? You keep twitching," Mossheart said, watching the she-cat twitch nervously every once in awhile.

Tawnyheart closed her eyes, and suddenly, Mossheart began to see all she was envisioning. He saw her in the woods with Moonstream, her being disguised as Moonstream as she gave birth. She was the mother of Thornfrost's kits...

"You're the mother of Thornfrost's kits?!" he gasped. "I thought they were Moonstream's! Does Thornfrost know?" Mossheart asked, his mouth spilling endless questions.

"Please, don't tell!" she begged. "Only Moonstream and I know, and now, you."

"But you can't be a medicine cat anymore!" Mossheart told her. "And were Moonstream and Thornfrost mates? How did she trick everyone?"

Tawnyheart stood, nose to nose with Mossheart. Her eyes were red and puffy from lack of sleep, and she had several bald patches from stress. "You will not tell a living soul, or else..." Her eyes seemed to flash red with anger.

"But—" Mossheart quivered. He turned, rushing back to camp.

"Oh, no you don't!" she spat, chasing after him. He rushed through the forest, Tawnyheart on his heels. He rushed into Smokestar's den, exhausted. "DON'T YOU DARE!"

He gasped as she pulled him out of the den into the center of the camp. "You just want to ruin my life, don't you?" she asked. "You've met your worst enemy," she spat, kicking dust into his face as she padded into Smokestar's den.

"SMOKESTAR!" Mossheart yowled.

Smokestar rushed out, finding the two. "What is going on?"

"Tawnyheart's afraid I'll tell her secret," Mossheart spat. Tawnyheart turned to him, an angry expression on her face.

Smokestar looked at them in confusion.

"That Thorn—"

He was cut off by Smokestar. "I didn't ask you, Mossheart. I asked Tawnyheart."

"I'm the mother of Thornfrost's kits," she spat at Smokestar. "Do whatever you want to me. I don't care anymore!"

"Well, Tawnyheart," Smokestar sighed. "Let me say I'm

disappointed in you. You know what has to be done, don't you? You can no longer be a medicine cat. A shame too. Spottedmask was going to retire soon. Tawnyheart, you will be relieved from your medicine cat duties. I will be making an announcement to the clan," Smokestar said, turning.

Mossheart watched as she blocked his path. "Please, give me a second chance. I didn't want this to happen. It just happened."

"I'm sorry, Tawnyheart, but you were born and raised here, and you've broken the law. It must be so. I'll be making an announcement soon," he said, heading up to the rock. Mossheart gasped as Tawnyheart looked at him as if she were to kill him. He hadn't meant to make her lose her position. It just came out somehow...

"CATS OF SNOWCLAN!" Smokestar yowled. Mossheart turned, seeing Fernbranch peek her head out of the nursery, mouthing to Mossheart what happened.

Smokestar began to explain of Tawnyheart's betrayal and how she was the true mother of Thornfrost's kits. Mossheart turned, seeing the golden-brown tom gasp in confusion. "She will be a warrior from now on," Smokestar announced. "If anyone is interested in being an apprentice, please let Spottedmask know. She was planning to retire, but now, she cannot."

Mossheart ran off to Fernbranch and the kits, guilt spreading throughout him.

"What? How did no one know sooner?" Fernbranch asked, confused.

"I-It's my fault," Mossheart told her. "She accidentally let it sleep, and I blurted to Smokestar. How's Tinykit?" he asked.

"Her vision has not declined anymore. I think she's just colorblind for now," Fernbranch told him. "Come rest. You've been through a lot today."

Mossheart nodded, laying down beside her. He closed his

eyes, his mind swimming in several thoughts.

Chapter 28

The morning sun had begun to rise, and Mossheart yawned as he awoke. He planned on playing with his kits today, just like he had been doing for the past few weeks. They were nearly two moons now, growing very fast. Mousestripe's kits were to be due any day, and Mossheart was relieved that his kits would have playmates soon.

As for Tawnyheart, she had become a warrior, her daughter, Sandpaw, taking over the position as medicine cat apprentice. He had hoped she would do well.

Tinykit's vision had not declined, and he assumed she would only be colorblind, never fully blind. This brought him joy, making up for the guilt he felt with Tawnyheart.

As he got up, he stretched and yawned, relaxed as a light snow fell over the camp. His kits had enjoyed playing in the snow, and he knew they would be even more excited when new-leaf came.

Just as Mossheart was about to pad out the den, an ear-damaging scream came from the nursery. He assumed it was Mousestripe, ready to give birth, but something was different about this scream. It was as if a cat was about to kill another cat.

Curious, Mossheart stood up, padding outside. He found Fernbranch with the kits, shaking in fear.

"What? What's going on?" Mossheart asked.

Fernbranch hid the kits behind her and pointed to the nursery. All the other queens and kits had exited, and inside was the screaming Mousestripe. Her nest was a bloody mess, and she let out another scream.

Suddenly, Mossheart noticed a cat appear. She had silver-

blue fur, white teeth as sharp as claws, and her eyes seemed to glow red. "It is complete now," the she-cat whispered.

"Moonstar," Fernbranch whispered. Mossheart suddenly remembered the tales he had heard of the she-cat who had attempted to overthrow the clans.

No cat even dared to move. It all felt wrong. Smokestar and Reedtail rushed in, hearing the terrifying scream.

As a white and black tom was born, Mossheart watched in horror as his white and black fur began to shimmer and change into silver-blue fur like Moonstar's, and his eyes turned a bright green.

"YES!" Moonstar yowled. Smokestar had his claws unsheathed, ready to attack, though it seemed Moonstar did not care.

"I thought she was dead," Mossheart whispered to Fernbranch.

"She is. She's a Dark Forest cat now," Fernbranch replied, the kits still hiding behind her.

"Perhaps you should take the kits out of here," Mossheart told her.

"No, we won't leave you," Fernbranch replied.

Mousestripe let out a scream again as a brown tabby tom was born, though his pelt began to shimmer and change, just like the last tom.

"STOP!" Smokestar hissed, leaping at Moonstar. She laughed, slitting his throat with a simple slight. Smokestar fell to the floor in pain.

"Smokestar!" Mossheart yelped. He moved, only to be pulled back by Fernbranch.

"Father," Mousestripe gasped, a tear sliding down her eye.

"Good luck," he whispered. His eyes looked unseeing at Mossheart, and suddenly, a sickening thought spread throughout him. Smokestar wasn't waking up. He had just lost his last life.

Mousestripe let out one last yowl as a white and ginger she-cat born. Mossheart waited for the kit's fur to change, but instead, her fur began to glow.

"WHAT?!" Moonstar hissed, squinting as the light stung her eyes.

Mossheart began to squint too as the she-cat's light grew even brighter. Moonstar turned to Mousestripe, hissing. Reedtail stood by her in fear as well.

"WHY, YOU LITTLE—" Moonstar leapt, about to slit Mousestripe's throat. Reedtail stepped in the way, his throat being slit instead of Mousestripe's. Mossheart felt like collapsing as he saw his friend fall the ground. It was as if all his memories with Reedtail flashed before him. He had remembered seeing him in the nursery with Fernbranch, going hunting, patrols...Now, it was gone.

Moonstar yowled as the light from the she-cat caused her to vanish. Now gone, Reedtail turned to Mousestripe. "I love you," he whispered.

"I love you too," Mousestripe replied.

Mossheart shuddered at the two dead bodies that would not wake in the den. He shuddered at the blood that coated the walls, the bloody toms whose eyes did no longer shine red like Moonstar's. Patches of fur had been missing from them, and the she-cat slept soundly.

"I'm confused. What happened?" Mossheart turned to Fernbranch.

"Awhile ago, Mousestripe had a terrible dream. Moonstar threatened to curse her kits in order to take over the clans again. She would've been successful if the she-cat had not been born to send her away. I believe the curse has been lifted from the toms,

though their fur color will not change back," Fernbranch sighed.

Mossheart watched as Cloudfur rushed in. "No!" he yelped, looking at his brother's dead body. "I guess I'm leader now," he sighed.

As the bodies were moved, Mossheart stood by the den with Cloudfur watching as she named her kits. She pointed to the tom missing fur on his tail and paw. "This will be Graykit," she said.

She turned to the other tom whose thigh and patches of his pelt were missing fur. "This will be Stormkit," she said.

Mossheart watched as she turned to the white and ginger she-cat. "This will be Shinykit," she whispered. Cloudfur locked eyes with Mousestripe, and he spoke.

"Shinykit may have vanished Moonstar for now, but she'll return."

Mousestripe nodded, and Mossheart suddenly noticed the fear inside of her. "I know."

As the nursery was cleaned and the kits moved inside, Mossheart helped bury Smokestar and Reedtail's body. He sat by both their graves, knowing he would be sitting vigil for them at night.

Cloudfur's yowl made Mossheart turn his head, and he looked, seeing the tom on the rock. "CATS OF SNOWCLAN!" Cloudfur yowled. "It is unfortunate that Smokestar has lost his last life, and it is unfortunate we've lost a great warrior too. As your new leader, I will be going with Spottedmask tonight to receive my nine lives. It is at this time, though, that I choose deputy. Thornfrost," Cloudfur said, turning to the golden-brown tom. "I would like you to be deputy. You are not the most perfect cat in this clan, but cats make mistakes, and a great leader learns from his mistakes."

"Thank you, Cloudfur," Thornfrost said, dipping his head.

Mossheart remembered hearing Fernbranch talking about

him getting too close with Tawnyheart, the medicine cat, and now that he knew that Tawnyheart had even given birth to his kits, it was a surprise Cloudfur had chosen him.

As Cloudfur left with Spottedmask and Sandpaw, Mossheart turned to the two graves. He first looked at Smokestar's, sighing.

"Smokestar, you were the best mentor any cat could have," he whispered. "Despite your flaws, you were a great father, and you were a father-figure to me. I hope you're happy with your family. Tell my mother I miss her," he whispered.

He looked at Reedtail's grave now. "Reedtail, you were my best friend. I remember being so pleased when you became mates with Mousestripe and when you found out she was expecting kits. I knew you'd be a great father. I guess now you'll never know," Mossheart whispered. "And I guess you know the truth now," Mossheart turned, seeing Thornfrost lick Mousestripe's cheek. Apparently they had secretly been mates for a few sunrises, and now that Reedtail has dead, they were now mates in public. "Your kits will be proud you died for them," he whispered.

He stood up, joining Fernbranch and the kits.

"I'm so sorry," she whispered.

Mossheart sighed, looking down. "No, it was their time to die. I hope they're happy in StarClan," he said, gazing up into the sky.

Chapter 29

Cloudfur had become Cloudstar shortly after Smokestar's death. So far, Thornfrost had turned out to be a loyal deputy, and Cloudstar was a great leader, even better than Smokestar, Mossheart had to admit.

Leaf-bare was slowly fading away, the plants slowly growing again, the snow slowly melting. Mossheart was sure the last snow had fallen, and now they were only waiting for it to melt.

Mossheart's kits were growing too, and in less than a moon, they would become apprentices. He hated seeing them grow up so fast. He remembered watching them be born in the nursery only so long ago.

Mossheart padded across the damp ground, the snow now only in the corners of the camp. A bright sun shined up ahead, the warmth of it beating down on the camp. His three kits wrestled together, laughing.

So far, Patchkit had enjoyed playing with Shinykit, Mousestripe's only daughter. Stormkit and Graykit's curse had been lifted, though a part of Moonstar still lived in them, making them lash out at times. It hurt Mossheart to see the two alone, no queen allowing their kits to play with them. He had to imagine how Mousestripe felt...

Morningpelt's kits had begun to play too, and he suspected Jaykit was beginning to form a crush on Minnowkit, one of her three kits.

As he padded towards the nursery, he watched Tinykit turn her head. "Daddy!" she exclaimed, running to him. Patchkit and Jaykit stopped playing too, running to their father. He watched as Fernbranch walked towards him, a smile on her face.

"They were waiting for you," she purred.

"I was on patrol, sorry," Mossheart told his kits. "Are you all having fun?"

Tinykit nodded. "I can't wait to be an apprentice soon! I'll be one in less than a moon!" she squeaked.

"Me too," Jaykit said. Mossheart realized how much he had grown, both his sons. Tinykit remained small though, not that Mossheart minded.

"Is new-leaf here yet?" Patchkit whined.

"Yes," Mossheart told his son. "We're just waiting for the rest of the snow to melt. Look, it's almost gone," he said, pointing to the melting pile of snow. The water trickled through the camp like a stream, almost, as it melted.

"I'm so glad leaf-bare is over," Patchkit said. "It was too cold!" Shinykit came behind Patchkit, giggling.

"You're always cold," she told him.

"Am not!" Patchkit replied.

Mossheart watched the two, though he looked at Shinykit with curiousity. Did she even know the powers she possessed? Had Mousestripe told her the prophecy she heard? Mossheart wasn't sure.

He felt Fernbranch lick his cheek, and he turned, smiling. "Our kits are growing up," he told her.

Fernbranch nodded and sighed. "I know. It seemed just yesterday they were small and helpless. They aren't warriors yet though, Mossheart. We'll know they're all grown up once they're warriors. For now, we just have to worry about their training and if they'll actually *become* warriors."

Mossheart laughed. "Of course they will. They have your hunting and fighting skills, Fernbranch."

"Yours too," she purred. "It's great seeing them play with the other kits."

"I never got to play with other kits," Mossheart sighed.

Fernbranch sighed as well. "Your past is not great, Mossheart, but think of how far you've come and how well your life is now. You have a loving mate and three kits. That's the best your life will get."

Mossheart smiled. "I know. I still wonder what it would be like if I lived with my mother and father in SnowClan."

"It'd be awkward," Fernbranch told him. "You'd have to grow up with your half-siblings, though, maybe they'd grow to you more."

"Maybe," Mossheart admitted, glancing over to see his kits playing. "They'll be great apprentices and warriors."

Fernbranch nodded. "Yes, they will."

"Daddy!"

Mossheart turned, seeing Tinykit standing by him. "What is it?" he asked.

"Can you teach us some fighting moves? Please," she begged.

Mossheart looked at Fernbranch for approval, and she gave a slow nod, her whiskers twitching in amusement.

"Alright. I'll show you a few," Mossheart told her.

Tinykit jumped up and down. "Yay!" she squeaked. Mossheart followed her over to his two sons who looked at their father with excitement.

"Alright, we'll only do a simple move," Mossheart told them. "When a cat leaps at you, you duck, okay? All your claws have to be sheathed."

His three kits nodded, waiting for a demonstration. "Jaykit, come here," Mossheart said. Jaykit slowly made his way towards his father, staring at him.

"Alright, it's quite easy," Mossheart said. I'm going to jump at you, Jaykit, and you duck, okay?"

Jaykit slowly nodded. Careful not to hurt his kit, Mossheart leapt over him, and Jaykit ducked, not that Mossheart would've knocked into him anyway.

"I did it!" Jaykit exclaimed.

Mossheart nodded. "Go practice with your siblings."

He watched as Jaykit, Patchkit, and even Tinykit leapt at each other. Each one of them was successful, even Tinykit who leapt over Patchkit.

"Great job!" Mossheart exclaimed, congratulating his kits. He smiled at them, watching them practice more. How he wished they would never grow up...

Chapter 30

"Mom, my pelt looks fine!" Jaykit complained as Mossheart watched Fernbranch lick his pelt roughly.

"Jaykit, you've got twigs and sap coated in your fur," Fernbranch complained.

Mossheart smiled as he watched Patchkit and Tinykit wait nervously for their turn. Today was there apprentice ceremony, and Mossheart could not believe how much they had grown. Only six moons ago, they'd been small, helpless kits, and now, they were going to train to be warriors!

"My turn!" Tinykit squeaked as Jaykit finished. Mossheart laughed as Jaykit quickly fixed his fur back to the way it was. It reminded him of himself.

"Are you excited?" Mossheart asked Jaykit.

Jaykit nodded. "I'm going to be the best warrior there ever was in SnowClan!"

"That's still awhile away," Mossheart told him. "You have to train for six moons."

"Who do you think our mentors will be?" Patchkit asked.

Mossheart shrugged. "I'm not sure. I'm sure Cloudstar has chosen someone perfect for each of you," Mossheart told them.

Fernbranch nodded. "You'll all be perfect apprentices, I'm sure. Your turn, Patchkit."

"No," Patchkit moaned, walking towards his mother.

Once Patchkit had finished being groomed, Fernbranch rushed with the three kits over the rock where Cloudstar stood. Mossheart breathed in the fresh new-leaf air. Now that leaf-bare

had finished, prey was being found again, and no cat suffered from greencough anymore.

Mossheart sat in the crowd with Fernbranch, smiling as his kits slowly sat by the bottom of the rock.

"ALL CATS OLD ENOUGH TO CATCH THEIR OWN PREY JOIN BENEATH THE ROCK FOR A CLAN MEETING!" Cloudstar yowled. He turned, nodding for Mossheart's kits to come up.

Fernbranch turned, smiling at Mossheart. Mossheart smiled back, turning to face his kits who stood proudly on the rock.

"Jaykit, Patchkit, and Tinykit have reached six moons which means they are ready to become apprentices," Cloudstar began.

"Jaykit," Cloudstar spoke. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Jaypaw."

Mossheart smiled as Jaykit stepped forward, smiling.

"Fuzzytail," Cloudstar announced.

Mossheart turned, spotting Cottonnose's son make his way out of the crowd. He dipped his head. "Yes, Cloudstar?"

"You are brave and loyal. Pass these onto Jaypaw," Cloudstar told him.

"I shall, Cloudstar," Fuzzytail replied. Mossheart watched him make his way towards Jaypaw and touch noses with him.

"Patchkit," Cloudstar spoke, moving forward to Mossheart's other son. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Patchpaw. Stoneclaw," Cloudstar spoke.

The golden brown tom made his way out of the crowd to face the leader. "Yes, Cloudstar?"

"You are fearless and a caring. Pass these traits onto Patchpaw."

"I will, Cloudstar," Stoneclaw replied, padding up to touch noses with Patchpaw.

"Tinykit," Cloudstar said, turning to the last kit on the rock. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Tinypaw. Larkheart," Cloudstar said, turning to the crowd.

Mossheart recognized Larkheart, Reedtail's sister, come out of the crowd. She was small, just like Tinypaw.

"Larkheart, you are brave and loving. Pass this onto Tinypaw."

"I will," the ginger she-cat said, running to touch noses with Tinypaw.

"JAYPAW! PATCHPAW! TINYPAW!" the clan cried. Mossheart joined in, cheering with the rest of the clanmates for his children. He was so proud of them. He had never felt this much joy before.

"I'm going to miss being in the nursery with them," Fernbranch told him.

"They're becoming warriors now though," Mossheart pointed out. "They couldn't stay with you forever."

"They're growing up, Mossheart, and we can't stop them," Fernbranch replied.

Once the clan had cleared, Mossheart padded with Fernbranch to see the new apprentices. He watched as Tinypaw's face brightened once she saw him.

"You were great!" Mossheart told his kits. "Cloudstar sure chose good mentors for you!"

"Do you think Fuzzytail can deal with me?" Jaypaw asked.

Mossheart laughed. "Cloudstar wouldn't have assigned him if he couldn't. You'll all be great warriors."

"You think so?" Patchpaw asked.

"Of course you will be," Fernbranch interrupted.

"Tinypaw, are you ready to go?" Larkheart spoke. Tinypaw turned to her parents one last time. "Coming, Larkheart! Bye Mom, bye Dad!"

Mossheart waved good-bye as his daughter went off, Jaypaw and Patchpaw leaving moments later.

"I'm going to miss them too," Mossheart told Fernbranch. "It'll be nice to have you back in the warriors' den."

Fernbranch nodded. "I can finally go back on patrols and hunting again! I hadn't even thought of that! Come on, Mossheart! Let's go hunting!"

Mossheart laughed. "You're a bit enthusiastic about this idea, Fernbranch. All right, we can go hunting, but you can't disturb our kits' tour of border."

"Oh, fine," Fernbranch spoke. "Come on, let's go!"

Together, Mossheart padded into the woods with Fernbranch. It reminded him of when they were apprentices padding through the woods together. Had that really been so long ago? It felt like it was only yesterday.

"What?" Fernbranch asked, noticing him deep in thought.

"I was just thinking of when we came into these woods when we were apprentices," Mossheart told her.

"We were so in love then," Fernbranch laughed.

"I know," Mossheart replied. "I still love you just as much."

"Me too," Fernbranch purred, nuzzling him. She stopped, spotting a squirrel. Mossheart watched as she pounced, killing it in seconds. "It feels good to do that again," she breathed, grabbing the squirrel.

"You've really missed hunting," Mossheart realized.

"I'm a warrior at heart. Of course I've missed it. I'm thrilled we've raised such lovely kits though," Fernbranch told him. "I wouldn't trade our kits for anything else in the world."

"Neither would I," Mossheart purred. He wondered if Skycloud would do the same. Of course she would. She had risked her life for Mossheart, so had his father.

For the rest of the morning, Fernbranch and Mossheart hunted, just like the old days. He enjoyed being with Fernbranch again. He wondered how his kits were doing with their first day of training. He was sure Fernbranch felt the same.

Together, they headed back to camp, laughing and smiling just like they had done when they were apprentices. All Mossheart was knew that he wouldn't trade this life for anything else.

Chapter 31

"ALL CATS OLD ENOUGH TO CATCH THEIR OWN PREY JOIN BENEATH THE ROCK FOR A CLAN MEETING!" Cloudstar's yowl rang through the camp, and Mossheart excitedly exited the den with Fernbranch by his side.

Mousestripe's kits were to become apprentices today. Mossheart's three kits had been training for a little over a moon now. From time to time, he and Fernbranch would check on the kits, making sure their training was going well. They had been improving well.

Mossheart had remembered that first day Patchpaw had returned with a squirrel in his mouth. It had been his first catch, and Stoneclaw had allowed him to eat it. Mossheart had smiled watching his son gobble up his first piece of prey. Mossheart still remembered the joy of catching his first meal.

Mossheart looked up now, watching Mousestripe's three kits head up the rock. He couldn't imagine how proud she was. He was sure Reedtail was as proud as she was, watching them from StarClan. Mossheart still missed his gentle friend.

"Shinykit, Graykit, and Stormkit are now six moons which means they are ready to become apprentices. Shinykit, from this day forward you shall be known as Shinypaw," Cloudstar told her.

"Tawnyheart," Cloudstar spoke.

Cats gasped as the ex-medicine cat came forward out of the crowd, her gaze on her paws. Was he really choosing a betrayer as a mentor?

"You have not had the greatest experience in this clan, though I do believe you'd be a great mentor to Shinypaw. You have learned loyalty and strength. Pass this onto Shinypaw," Cloudstar instructed her.

"I shall," Tawnyheart said, touching noses with the she-cat.

"I can't believe Cloudstar would assign her to teach an apprentice," Fernbranch whispered to Mossheart.

Mossheart nodded slowly, though he picked up the determination in Tawnyheart's eyes, and he thought maybe she would do a good job. Cloudstar must've picked her to teach Shinypaw for a reason. Shinypaw was a special she-cat after all.

"Graykit, from this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Graypaw," Cloudstar told the tom who looked down at his paws, unwilling to face the clan. "Sparrowwing."

Mossheart watched as the brown tabby tom stepped forward. He was a young warrior, though he was skilled. Mossheart knew he'd do a good job of mentoring the tom.

"You show honor and courage in everything you do. Please pass this onto Graypaw," Cloudstar told the tom.

"I will, Cloudstar," Sparrowwing told him, running up to the tom to touch noses with him.

"Stormkit," Cloudstar said, turning to the last kit. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Stormpaw." There was a pause until Cloudstar spoke again. "Mossheart."

Mossheart froze. Had he just called his name? Cats turned to stare at him, and he slowly stepped forward. He gazed at Cloudstar's blue eyes, gulping as he awaited him to speak.

"You possess strength and love. Pass this onto Stormpaw as you mentor him," Cloudstar told him.

Mossheart nodded. "I will," he said, running to Stormpaw. He ran to the tom, trying to look at him like he was a normal apprentice. He knew this was not true though, and he tried his best to smile as he touched noses to his apprentice.

"SHINYPAW! GRAYPAW! STORMPAW!" the clan cried. Mossheart turned, seeing Mousestripe cheering for her kits. She must've been proud.

Mossheart padded back to Fernbranch, still shocked that he would be mentoring his very first apprentice, and not an easy one either. Fernbranch eyed him, then spoke.

"Congratulations, Mossheart. Cloudstar must've chosen you for a reason. I'm sure you will mentor Stormpaw well," Fernbranch told him.

"Thanks," Mossheart said, looking at his paws. "I know this sets us back on things. You just got out of the nursery, and now I have to mentor."

"It's fine," Fernbranch said, gently setting her tail on his shoulder. "Go mentor him. He needs a great cat to mentor him, Mossheart, and that cat is you."

"Thank you for understanding, Fernbranch," Mossheart said, waving his tail as he padded to where the three apprentices sat. Stormpaw looked up as he spotted the tom, and Mossheart turned away. It was hard not to look at his bare patches of fur.

"Are you ready to tour?" Mossheart asked Stormpaw.

Stormpaw nodded. "Yes, Mossheart."

"Let's go," Mossheart said. The tom walked by his side as they padded into the forest together. He watched as Stormpaw became amazed at the sights.

"It's like you've never been in the forest before," Mossheart told Stormpaw.

"I haven't," Stormpaw admitted, gazing at his paws.

"Oh, I thought you would have," Mossheart said.

"Mother didn't let me wander out of the nursery that often. Graypaw too."

"Shinypaw?"

"She's probably been out here before," Stormpaw said, looking around.

"Why don't we sit down here," Mossheart suggested, sitting down near a log. Stormpaw nodded, sitting down beside him.

"I know what this is about," Stormpaw told Mossheart immediately. "You're going to ask about me, aren't you?"

Mossheart sighed. "I'm not refusing to mentor you, Stormpaw. I just wanted to know how often these outbursts are."

"It's a funny thing, really. Mother told Graypaw and I the curse was gone. Moonstar had left our bodies and would never return. I disagree. I believe we still have the curse. You don't know how many times cats will look at me and whisper and drag their kits away. You don't know how many times cats have looked at me in horror when I've accidentally scratched a cat. I've hurt Shinypaw before, so has Graypaw. I hate the feeling when it happens too. It's like I can't control it.

"When I was younger, they would happen often. I'd be playing, and suddenly I'd turn on a cat. My mother would hold me down, screaming for it to go away. Eventually, it would. Now, it seems to happen only when I'm angry. Moonstar's rage takes part in me, and so I try to keep calm. I'm worse than Graypaw. Sparrowwing will have an easier time with him. If I do happen to lash out, please know I'm not doing it to hurt any one. It is Moonstar who is doing it. A small part of her still lives inside me," Stormpaw told him.

Mossheart was amazed by his story. It was like he was talking to a full-grown warrior, not a very young apprentice.

"I understand, Stormpaw. Come on, let's go look around the border," Mossheart said. Stormpaw nodded, rising to his feet.

Together they padded through the woods, Mossheart explaining what they would be learning as the time went on.

Mossheart padded towards the river, Stormpaw following behind. His eyes were wide and gleaming as he gazed into the stream.

"This is the river," Mossheart explained. The river gurgled slowly as it went along. Green-leaf had replaced new-leaf, and now the water levels were beginning to go down.

"During green-leaf it goes down," Mossheart explained. "Here we can fish and swim, even, not that I recommend it. There's a waterfall if you continue on, though we won't go by there today. It's a bit dangerous."

"All right," Stormpaw said, walking with Mossheart through the woods. They came out into a meadow where the river continued to flow.

"This is the meadow," Mossheart explained. "It's perfect for catching rabbits, mice. You're lucky that you are an apprentice in green-leaf. You'll have great opportunities for hunting."

Stormpaw smiled.

Mossheart continued to show him the borders, explaining the NightClan border and the BirdClan border. The FoxClan border was the last thing they went by, and Mossheart explained how they were beginning to fade as a clan altogether, like CloudClan.

"That's a shame," Stormpaw said. "I haven't heard much about BirdClan," he told to Mossheart.

"It's a newer clan up in the foothills," Mossheart told him. "Their clan is just starting, and they don't seem to bug anyone that much. NightClan has been here since I was an apprentice, and they have been known to cause battles before," he said, remembering the roaring cries, seeing Fernbranch fall. He'd only been an apprentice at the time.

"Do you think I'll take part in any battles?" Stormpaw asked.

"Maybe," Mossheart said. "I think every cat takes place in at least one. It's not something to look forward to though. Mine was just a border attack, nothing big. It was still terrifying though."

"I don't want to be in a battle," Stormpaw told him. "I know my Moonstar instincts will kick in, and...I might kill a cat," he whimpered.

"Don't worry. There are no threats being made to SnowClan," Mossheart assured him.

"I'm scared for Shinypaw," Stormpaw admitted after a long silence.

"What do you mean?" Mossheart asked.

"Recently she was told about the prophecy. My brother and I learned a bit more about the curse too. Don't you know what it says, Mossheart? It says her light will vanish evil, but it will fade out. Evil is coming, Mossheart. I can feel it," Stormpaw shivered.

"Relax, Stormpaw, everything is going to be fine," he said. "Come on, we need to go find some moss. I almost forgot about how you had to help the elders."

Stormpaw nodded, following Mossheart through the woods. They stopped by a marsh, and Mossheart beginning picking moss out of the ground.

"I'm going to show you a little trick that Smokestar showed me," Mossheart told him.

"I never knew Smokestar. Was he a good leader?" Stormpaw asked.

"Well, he made mistakes, Stormpaw, just like any leader. But yes, he was a good leader. He was my father-figure, actually. I grew up with no father, and I only knew my mother for a short time."

"I never knew my father," Stormpaw sighed, looking at his paws. "Did you?"

Mossheart nodded. "Your father was a very good cat, Stormpaw. Reedtail was my best friend, a great warrior. I'm sure Thornfrost has kept you company though."

Stormpaw nodded. "He's a good cat too, and he acts like my father. I wish I got to know my father."

"As do I," Mossheart said. He shoved the moss towards Stormpaw. "Okay, back to the trick," he said. "Lightly chew on the moss to drain the water."

Stormpaw nodded, beginning to lightly chew on the moss. Water dripped down his chin as he continued to do so.

"Now put it on the ground and *lightly* step on it. You don't want to crush the moss," Mossheart told him.

Stormpaw nodded as he began to slowly step on it. More water drained out as he did so.

"Good," Mossheart said. "Now continue this process about two more times, and you'll have perfect moss for the elders."

Stormpaw nodded, beginning to repeat the process. Once he had finished, his moss was fluffy and dry, perfect for the elders.

"The elders will really appreciate that moss," Mossheart said. "You might have to pick some ticks off them from time to time too."

"Okay," Stormpaw said, carrying the moss in his mouth.

They headed back to camp, and Mossheart excused Stormpaw for the rest of the day, telling him to go deliver the moss. He met back up with Fernbranch who smiled at him as he arrived.

"How did it go?" she asked.

"Perfect," Mossheart said. "Stormpaw is not the cat who everyone makes him up to be."

Chapter 32

For three moons Mossheart had been training Stormpaw. The tom had been eager to learn, becoming a master at fighting and hunting. As the three moons went by, the green-leaf season had begun to fade, and leaf-fall would be upon the cats soon.

Mossheart's kits had been doing well. Jaypaw was a master fighter, Tinypaw a great hunter, and Patchpaw was a marvelous tree climber. He was proud of his kits, and he hoped they would be great warriors as they continued their training.

Stormpaw had been doing well also. Mossheart was proud of his first apprentice he had mentored. The tom had not lashed out once during their three moons of training, and Mossheart could tell Stormpaw was happy about this.

Mossheart awoke early, gazing into Fernbranch's green eyes. "Good morning," he purred.

Fernbranch smiled. "Good morning. Another day of training?"

Mossheart nodded, licking her cheek. "Come on, you can share some food with me," he told her.

Fernbranch rose, following Mossheart outside into the camp where the fresh-kill pile lay. The pile had begun to decrease, not by much, but some. The leaves would be falling in no time.

"Leaf-fall is coming," Fernbranch said, gazing at the sky.

Mossheart nodded. "I know. I can't believe it would've come by so quickly. It seems last leaf-bare we were raising three kits. They'll be warriors by leaf-bare now."

Fernbranch nodded. "Sometimes I miss those days in the nursery where they would curl up beside me. I'd tell them stories,

lessons. You'd teach them how to hunt and fight. I wish everything was like that again," the tortoiseshell spoke as she sat down next to Mossheart.

Mossheart grabbed a squirrel then laid it at her paws. "In three moons they'll be glorious warriors, just like we thought they would be. Can you imagine how proud we'll be when we get to witness their ceremony and hear their warrior names?"

"We'll be very proud," Fernbranch purred, taking a bite of her squirrel. Mossheart watched her look over at Jaypaw who shared a mouse with Minnowpaw. Graypaw sat nearby, almost like a third wheel.

"How's Stormpaw?" Fernbranch asked.

"Good," Mossheart said. "We're practicing fighting right now. He's very good."

"Moonstar, no doubt," Fernbranch spoke.

"I don't believe it's Moonstar that gives him good fighting skills. Reedtail was a good warrior, and Mousestripe is Smokestar's daughter. He comes from a line of fighters," Mossheart said, not wanting to approach the idea of his curse.

"Has Tawnyheart been teaching Shinypaw well?" Fernbranch questioned.

Mossheart nodded. "Yes, very well, actually. We were planning to train with them today, actually. I think Graypaw is going off with Sparrowwing, though he'll be welcome to join."

"Do our kits get the opportunity to train with each other?" Fernbranch asked.

Mossheart nodded. "I've seen Patchpaw and Tinypaw training together, Jaypaw occassionally. We never really got to train together," Mossheart said, taking a bite of his squirrel.

"That's because you went *missing* at the beginning of your training," Fernbranch told him. Mossheart still remembered those

days out in the woods as he learned about his past.

"Well, I know about my past now," Mossheart said, rising to let Fernbranch finish the remainder of the squirrel. "I'll see you this afternoon. I love you."

"I love you too," Fernbranch purred.

Mossheart padded away from his mate, coming to Stormpaw who sat next to Cheetahpaw, a fellow apprentice. She turned away as Mossheart came forward.

"Are you ready?" Mossheart asked.

Stormpaw nodded. "Shinypaw is coming with us, right?" He seemed excited to have his sister coming along.

Mossheart nodded. "Yes, Shinypaw will be coming. Have you seen them?"

Stormpaw nodded, pointing his tail to the tortoiseshell and white and ginger she-cat. As Stormpaw looked over, Shinypaw looked up, and she and Tawnyheart padded towards them.

"Are you ready to train?" Mossheart asked Tawnyheart.

Tawnyheart nodded. "I say we go by the meadow. It'll give a nice spot for fighting practice without running into rocks and trees."

"Good idea," Mossheart said. "Into the meadow!"

Together the group of cats padded into the woods together. Stormpaw spoke quietly with Shinypaw as they went through the woods. The trees had already begun to lose their green color and turn a yellow orange.

Mossheart watched as a leaf drifted down onto Stormpaw's nose. Stormpaw sneezed, the leaf flying away. Shinypaw giggled and continued on, laughing at her brother.

"Some leaves falling," Mossheart examined, seeing a few leaves drift down. "Leaf-fall has arrived."

"Thank StarClan," Tawnyheart breathed. "That warm sun did not feel great on my coat. I felt like I was going to die from heat."

"What's leaf-bare like for the clan?" Shinypaw asked.

"Cold," Stormpaw told her.

"I know that!" Shinypaw argued.

"Well, you were young kits as leaf-bare came to an end. Basically, the snow falls often, and prey is scarce. Greencough takes place, killing cats," Tawnyheart explained.

Mossheart watched as Stormpaw and Shinypaw froze in fear. "And, it's great for hunting lessons. Don't worry, cats are fed. It'll be fine. Don't you worry about leaf-bare. Enjoy leaf-fall while it lasts."

Shinypaw and Stormpaw nodded, and soon enough, they came into the meadow. The grass was dry and frail from the dry green-leaf, but Mossheart knew once the first rain came, the grass would turn green again.

"All right, we'll be doing some fighting training," Tawnyheart told the apprentices. "Is there any particular lesson you think we should cover, Mossheart?" Tawnyheart asked, her emerald eyes gazing into his.

Mossheart couldn't help but turn away as he gazed into her eyes. They were full of hurt, abandonment, and it was all his fault that Tawnyheart had been known as a failure to the clan. "Um, perhaps dodging, ducking," he suggested.

"Good one," Tawnyheart said. "You can be my example."

Mossheart nodded as she padded a few pawsteps away from him. "Now, I'm going to leap at Mossheart. He can either duck or dodge if he does not wish to fight back. Ready, Mossheart? Demonstrate ducking."

Mossheart nodded. The she-cat soared into the air, and

Mossheart ducked, Tawnyheart landing on the other side of him.

"Very good," Tawnyheart told him. "Now dodging. I will leap at Mossheart again."

Mossheart waited as the she-cat leapt. This time, Mossheart moved quickly to the side, Tawnyheart landing on the spot he had once stood.

"It takes a lot of practice and time," Mossheart told the apprentices. "Don't think you can get it on the first try. You'll practice with your mentors first, and then you two can go against each other."

Shinypaw and Stormpaw nodded. Stormpaw padded to Mossheart's side, and Mossheart crouched. "I'm going to leap, Stormpaw. Duck or dodge."

Stormpaw nodded. Mossheart leapt, and Stormpaw stood, ducking as Mossheart landed near him.

"Good," Mossheart told him. Together they practiced for awhile. Stormpaw seemed to get ducking better than dodging. Stormpaw could not move away fast enough during dodging, Mossheart landing on him several times. Once he was slightly able to get the hang of it, Mossheart decided it was time for him to verse his sister.

"Are you sure he's ready, Mossheart?" Tawnyheart asked.

Mossheart nodded. "Yes, Tawnyheart. I think that he's prepared."

"Well then, let them battle," Tawnyheart said. "Shinypaw, over to the left. Stormpaw, the right. Shinypaw, you try to attack him first. Then you, Stormpaw."

Stormpaw nodded, waiting for Shinypaw. Shinypaw leapt in the air, and Stormpaw attempted to dodge. He was too late though, and Shinypaw ended up crushing him. He lay on the ground, groaning.

"Stormpaw, are you all right?" Shinypaw asked, getting off the tom.

"Fine," Stormpaw said. "Maybe we should try you now," he suggested.

Shinypaw nodded, standing to the side. Mossheart watched as Stormpaw began to crouch down to leap. Suddenly, Mossheart noticed him tensing, trying to look away.

"Stormpaw," Mossheart began.

The tom shook his head, his gaze back on Shinypaw. He leapt, and Shinypaw moved away. Stormpaw tumbled onto the ground, slowly getting back up.

"Good job, Shinypaw!" Tawnyheart congratulated the she-cat.

"We can keep practicing, Stormpaw," Mossheart said. He stopped as the tom looked at the ground. He looked up, and his eyes flashed a blood red. Suddenly, the tom began tearing up the ground, hissing in anger. Mossheart stood back, terrified.

"He's having a tantrum!" Shinypaw gasped in fear. "Stormpaw, Stormpaw, it's me!" she begged.

"Stay back, Shinypaw!" Tawnyheart instructed. "We don't want you getting hurt," she snapped. "How long do these last?"

Shinypaw ignored the question, nearing Stormpaw again. She closed her eyes, and suddenly her pelt began to light up. A small flash seemed to blind Mossheart, and once he could see again, Stormpaw lay on the ground, panting. Shinypaw stood by him, helping him up.

"What? How did you do that?" Mossheart asked.

"I can rid dark forces," Shinypaw explained to him. "It took me awhile how to figure out how to do it at my own command. I can only penetrate so much force. Too much force could wipe me out. Stormpaw, are you all right?"

Stormpaw nodded. "Yes, fine," he said. Mossheart noticed a thin scratch down his leg. Blood oozed down slowly.

"Stormpaw, what happened?" Mossheart asked.

"I was frustrated," Stormpaw told him. "I tried to hold it back, but I couldn't." He gazed at the cut on his leg. "I hate everything!" he grumbled, kicking a stone.

"Don't say that, Stormpaw!" Shinypaw begged him. "You don't want another tantrum!"

"Another tantrum?! That's all everyone cares about! Don't let Stormpaw near any cat, he'll kill them for sure, and it's all on purpose! It's easy for you to say, Shinypaw! You were spared out of all of us! You're known as a hero while Graypaw and I are known as cursed!" Stormpaw hissed, beginning to run away from spot in the meadow.

"Stormpaw!" Mossheart growled, chasing after the tom. He watched as Stormpaw sat on a rock, gazing at the ground. Mossheart slowly approached the tom, sighing. "Stormpaw, I know you're upset."

"Yeah, leave me alone," he grumbled.

"Stormpaw, we all go through something terrible. You went through the death of your father, the curse. Shinypaw, well, you said it yourself. Her light will fade out after it rids evil. Haven't you thought long and hard about that?"

"Yes, I have," Stormpaw said. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said those things. It's just all so unfair."

"I know," Mossheart said, sitting down beside him. "If only cats could see the real you, not the fake you. My father died before I was born, and my mother died shortly after my birth."

"I'm sorry, but it doesn't seem the same," Stormpaw told him.

Mossheart laughed. "You don't understand anything. My

father died protecting my mother from a cat who threatened to kill her. My mother gave birth to me when she was being held captive by an evil cat. I grew up in confined walls. But soon, that evil cat softened up. He and my mother fell *in love.* A fire spread, and my mother was injured. She and that cat died in the fire, and she told me to run to save myself.

"I was raised by an older she-cat, though she died, and I became a kittypet. I met another kittypet who I grew to love. Another cat came in the way, and that kittypet died. My mother used her StarClan powers to save her, and that cat and I were sent on a journey by the old kittypet whom I thought died.

"We traveled for moons, and the kittypet who was supposed to join me in SnowClan ended up dying as we came to SnowClan. I was all alone in SnowClan with half-siblings who hated me. Fernbranch was the only one who helped me through that."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know," Stormpaw said.

"But don't you see? We all go through something tragic. It's what makes us us. You are special, Stormpaw. Don't let any cat tell you otherwise."

"Thank you, Mossheart," Stormpaw smiled. "I should probably go apologize to Shinypaw."

"That would be a good idea," Mossheart said. "We need to get that leg of yours fixed too."

"All right," Stormpaw said, beginning to drift off as he walked towards Shinypaw. "Thanks, once again," he said, smiling as if he were a regular cat.

Chapter 33

Time had passed. The warmth of green-leaf had disappeared, and the leaves had begun to fall. Leaf-fall had come upon the cats, and soon it began to rain again, and the prey was beginning to burrow away. Leaf-bare would arrive very shortly.

Mossheart stretched, excited for the new day. He felt Fernbranch stir beside him, and she lifted her head up, smiling. Mossheart gently licked her cheek. "Do you think they'll do well?" he asked.

Fernbranch nodded. Today would be the day their kits would pass their test to become warriors, and Mossheart hoped they did well. For five moons now he himself had been training Stormpaw, and he knew Stormpaw would also become a warrior shortly.

"I've got to head off," Mossheart told Fernbranch. "I'll see you this afternoon for the ceremony hopefully."

"See you then," Fernbranch said, watching as Mossheart ran off to find Stormpaw. The tom was near the fresh-kill pile eating a small mouse.

"Hey," Mossheart said, sitting down next to him.

Stormpaw smiled. "Hi," he replied.

"Are you ready for the day?" Mossheart asked.

Stormpaw nodded. "I'm just finishing up this mouse," he said. Mossheart nodded, watching the tom eat. Stormpaw had not had any more outbreaks, and his behavior had improved. For once, Mossheart didn't see the small tom who believed he was a monster, but a new cat.

"Ready?" Mossheart asked.

Stormpaw nodded, following him into the woods. Before Mossheart could say anything, Stormpaw spoke. "You know you can't interrupt your kits' exams today," Stormpaw said.

Mossheart laughed. "I know. I sure wish I could watch them though."

"They'll do fine," Stormpaw told him. "They're good apprentices, and they'll be even greater warriors."

"Thanks," Mossheart smiled. "I can't believe they're almost warriors. It was only so long ago they were tiny kits."

Stormpaw gave him a gentle smile. "Time flies fast."

Mossheart nodded, glancing around the woods. "So, I guess we should practice some fighting moves today."

Stormpaw nodded. "That would be good. What will we learn?" he asked.

Mossheart thought for a moment. "You've mastered ducking, of course, and dodging. You've learned to swipe, leap. Maybe we should practice clawing of the belly."

"All right," Stormpaw said.

"Keep your paws sheathed," Mossheart instructed him. "I don't want to be sent to Spottedmask."

"I will do so," Stormpaw replied, laughing.

"All right, so if your paws are free when a cat knocks you down, you may be able to claw their belly to get free. If not, we've already practiced pushing off. I'll try you first. Be aware that I'm going to go easy on you the first time so you get a feel to it," Mossheart said.

Stormpaw nodded. "Okay."

Mossheart leapt at the tom, holding him down lightly so his paws were free. He felt Stormpaw paw at his stomach, and Mossheart leapt off. "Good," Mossheart said. "I'm going to try harder this time, all right?"

Mossheart leapt again, this time holding the tom down with a firmer grip. Stormpaw struggled and was able to get one paw free. He clawed at Mossheart's belly, and Mossheart stepped off once again.

"Good," Mossheart said. "Let's also try knocking off again. It can be used as a substitute if clawing the stomach doesn't work."

He leapt at Stormpaw again, holding him down with all his might. Stormpaw struggled, trying hard to get his paw free, but it was no use. Instead, Mossheart felt the tom kick him with his legs, and Mossheart was pushed off, collapsing to the ground.

"Are you all right?" Stormpaw asked, running to his side.

Mossheart got up. "Yes, I'm fine," he assured him. "You're quite strong, actually. That's a good thing. Great job. Let's keep practicing."

For awhile longer he continued to practice with Stormpaw. The tom did well, and they continued to try different methods. At one point, Mossheart thought he had seen the familiar tail of Patchpaw, but he guessed he was seeing things. Even if it had been his son, Mossheart knew he couldn't have spoken to him anyway.

The day soon came to an end, and Mossheart and Stormpaw headed back to camp exhausted. As soon as Mossheart stumbled into camp, Fernbranch ran to his side, her eyes glowing.

"They've passed, Mossheart! They've passed!" she exclaimed.

Stormpaw smiled at Mossheart. "Congratulations!"

Mossheart couldn't believe it. His children were going to become warriors, just like their father and mother. "Where are they?" Mossheart asked.

Fernbranch pointed her tail to the rock where the three sat. Mossheart smiled, and he left Stormpaw and Fernbranch behind to go and speak to them.

As the apprentices saw their father, their eyes lit up. "Congratulations!" Mossheart exclaimed.

Patchpaw smiled. He was nearly Mossheart's size now, only a tad bit smaller. "I'm so excited! I can't wait to be a warrior!" he exclaimed.

"Neither can I," Tinypaw spoke. She wasn't very tiny anymore. In fact, she was nearly the same size as Fernbranch.

"ALL CATS OLD ENOUGH TO CATCH THEIR OWN PREY JOIN BENEATH THE HIGHROCK FOR A CLAN MEETING!" Cloudstar's yowl rang through the camp.

"I've got to go. I'll see you after the ceremony," Mossheart said.

Jaypaw smiled. "See you then."

Mossheart disappeared, finding Fernbranch in the crowd. Together they sat, anxiously awaiting to see their kits, who weren't really kits anymore, become warriors.

"I call upon my warrior ancestors to look upon these three apprentices. They have trained hard to follow your noble code, and I grant them to you as warriors in return. Patchpaw," Cloudstar began. "Do you promise to uphold the warrior code even if it means risking your life?"

"I do," Patchpaw spoke. He looked so sophisticated, like a true warrior.

"Then from this day forward, you shall be known as Patchfur!" Cloudstar announced. He turned to Tinypaw who shivered in fear. At the sight of Cloudstar though, she stood up taller.

"Tinypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even

if it means risking your life?" he asked.

"I do," Tinypaw spoke loud and clearly.

"Then from this day forward, your warrior name shall be Tinypelt!"

Mossheart watched as Cloudstar then moved to Jaypaw. Jaypaw stood up the tall, looking into the crowd. Mossheart noticed he was the largest out of all three, the strongest too, no doubt.

"Jaypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even if it costs you your life?" Cloudstar asked.

"I do," Jaypaw proudly spoke.

"Then from this day forward, you shall be known as Jayfur!"

"PATCHFUR! TINYPELT! JAYFUR!" The clan cried. Mossheart cried with them, cheering for his sons and daughter.

He turned to Fernbranch who had tears in her eyes. "Oh, I wish they hadn't grown up," she spoke softly.

Mossheart smiled. "Be happy. They're warriors now, Fernbranch, and soon, they'll have their own families."

Once the crowd moved away, Mossheart and Fernbranch ran to their children, smiling.

"Congratulations!" Fernbranch exclaimed.

"I can't believe we're warriors now," Tinypelt spoke. "It feels so odd."

Jayfur nodded. "Yes, but we'll finally be out of that terrible apprentice den."

Patchfur laughed. "Thank StarClan!"

"And you'll be keeping watch tonight?" Mossheart asked.

The three nodded. Mossheart smiled. "I'm so proud of all of

you!" he said. "You'll make the best of warriors!"

Fernbranch nodded. "Yes, you will."

Patchfur turned his head, spotting Shinypaw, and he ran off. Soon enough, Tinypelt and Jayfur disappeared moments later, leaving Mossheart and Fernbranch alone.

"Are you all right?" Mossheart asked, watching Fernbranch who looked at her paws.

"Just sad, that's all," she said. She looked up, smiling a little. "Do you remember your warrior ceremony where I ran to you and screamed at you because I was so angry you left me alone?"

Mossheart nodded. "You practically killed me!"

"I thought you weren't coming back. I was so mad that you had left me to cry and mourn over you when I loved you so much," Fernbranch said.

Mossheart smiled. "That's in the past now, Fernbranch. I promise to never leave again because now, I've realized something. SnowClan is my home, it always has been. It's where all my loved ones are, and I wouldn't trade this place for anywhere else."

Fernbranch smiled and nuzzled him gently. Mossheart smiled, looking into the evening sky. And as he looked, he swore he saw his mother and father in the dim stars that were beginning to shine, and he knew they were always watching him...

Epilogue

Skycloud padded through StarClan, her silver pelt gleaming in the forest. As she walked, she heard footsteps, and she turned, spotting a familiar white pelt.

"Mossclaw," she breathed.

He ran to her side, nuzzling her gently. "Why are you in these woods when cats are celebrating your marvelous deeds in the meadow?" he asked her.

Skycloud shrugged, looking into the starry sky. "I came to think, I suppose."

"Think about what?" Mossclaw asked her.

Skycloud gazed at Mossclaw, realizing how much bigger he was than her. She gazed into his beautiful green eyes that she had fallen in love with, and she smiled. "Everything," she said. "Come on, I'll come with you to the meadow," she said.

Skycloud padded by his side as they headed into the meadow. As soon as she took her first pawstep, she spotted cats cheering and smiling for her.

"Come on," Mossclaw said, pushing her along.

Skycloud let out a gentle smile, sitting down. Mossclaw sat down beside her, and the cheers of cats stopped. Icestar grinned at her, her blue eyes gleaming. "Congratulations, Skycloud. You've helped Mossheart his entire life, and now, your hard work is done."

"Thank you," Skycloud said softly.

"Because of you he's discovered what really matters in life," Rosefur began. "Love."

Skycloud smiled. Love really was the only thing that

mattered in life. It was love that made her whole life worth while. It was the love of her family, the love of her mates, all of it.

"And you represent love well," Petalnose told her.

"Petalnose," Skycloud spoke, smiling. She had not seen her sister in quite some time.

Petalnose sat down beside her. "I'm so proud of you, sister."

"But, how can I represent it so well? Petalnose, you died going after the one you love. Rosefur, you died as you were going to forgive Smokestar. Smokestar, you died to protect your daughter. How am I any different?"

Smokestar smiled. "Because you have more of it than anyone else. You're loved by so many, Skycloud. You raised your sister's kits out of the love of your sister, you fell in love three times. Your love helped Mossheart along the way."

Skycloud smiled. "Well, I suppose you're right. But I couldn't have helped Mossheart, or any of my kits, without the help of StarClan and my ancestors."

She looked around, smiling at cats. She spotted Tooth near the back, his green eyes gleaming at her. She even spotted Blacktail who gave her a gentle smile.

"Skycloud! Skycloud!" The cats cheered. Skycloud smiled as their cheers filled her ears. She turned to Mossclaw who gave her a smile, and she looked at Petalnose on the other side of her. Oh, how she loved to have all her close ones by her, and someday, she would await Mossheart, Ashclaw, and Cindertail to walk with her as well. But for now, she was perfectly fine where she was...with the ones she loved.

THE END

Author's Note

Dear reader,

One year ago, I began to write Mosskit Book 1: Skycloud. Never would I know today that I would write such a successful trilogy with so many wonderful views and fans. It breaks my heart to write that this is the end of the Mosskit Trilogy, this is the end to such a wonderful series I enjoyed writing.

I could have not written all of this without you wonderful fans who encouraged me to continue to write and keep on going! Without you, this trilogy would be nothing at all!

As much as I thank my fans, I also must thank some YouTube users as well. If you do not already know, I base all my warriors books off role-playing, and without some of these users, this story could not come together.

I first thank badgerclaw29 on YouTube. Badgerclaw29 role-played Mossclaw, and she was the original role-player of Mosskit. Unfortunately, she quit role-playing halfway through, so I took over Mosskit shortly after. Thank you very much to you, badgerclaw. Her channel is here http://www.youtube.com/user/badgerclaw29. You will probably be able to find our old role-play comments if you keep scrolling through comments.

I also must thank sarah9191919 who role-played Fernbranch. If Fernbranch had not existed, this book would probably not exist, so I very much thank her! http://www.youtube.com/sarah9191919 (Fun Fact: She also role-played Tawnyheart and Thornfrost too)

And I thank all those other users who also contributed. I cannnot believe how much success this book has gotten, and so, I thank all of you for such a wonderful experience writing this book. Thank you once again, and I hope you continue to read and write!

~Maeve